

BOOK REVIEWS

Grant, John Webster: *Moon of Wintertime: Missionaries and the Indians of Canada in Encounter Since 1534*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984, viii + 315 pp., Maps, Photos, Refs. (paper), ISBN 0-8020-6541-4.

Grant offers the reader a comprehensive work which supplements the excellent, but fragmented analysis of individual missions and missionaries pursued previously by himself and other historians. Grant believes the story of Indian-Christian encounter can be told in terms of a few major agencies whose work spanned large areas over several centuries. Scant attention is paid therefore to small scale efforts. Also omitted for want of space are the Inuit, while the Metis are only included when their religious history intersects with that of the Indians. The result of this approach is that no systematic account of the development of Metis church life is included and remains to be written.

The title was chosen from J.E. Middleton's hymn "Twas in the Moon of Wintertime," to suggest that Indians were most eager to accept Christianity because they found it superior to their own religious truth or were introduced to it at a time when their animal spirits were inaccessible or seemingly had abandoned them. Grant attempts to revise the common picture of the Indian as a reluctant or recalcitrant receiver of the Christian message, claiming that the evidence suggests otherwise. The evidence he produces, such as that by the end of the nineteenth century a great majority of the Indians of Canada were at least nominally Christian, is far from being conclusive or convincing. He is critical of anthropologists who see a continuity of traditional religion as if there had not been a Christian presence, blaming this perception in part on wily Indians beguiling naive Whites. Grant balances this criticism by accepting the possibility that missionaries may have been similarly duped into seeing what the Indians thought they wanted to see: a glowing community of conforming Indian Christians.

The book is divided into eleven chapters which examine the first contacts in the sixteenth century and follow the contours of encounter through a chronological linear narrative ending with the 1960's. The first few chapters rely heavily on the Jesuit Relations and standard nineteenth century mission histories as well as missionary accounts, which contribute little that is original. These works tell far more about the White institutions, their values and aspirations, than they do about the Indians. These works were not so much histories as they were propaganda and recruitment manuals on one level, while on another they were easily read, action packed stories consumed for light reading.

Chapter six relies upon a preponderance of secondary literature to account

for the contact experience in the Northwest and continues the "canned" presentation found in the first half of the book. Chapter eight represents a turning point which surpasses the litany of endless details and uninspired narrative found in the first part of the book, yielding a more judicious analysis which poses many provocative questions and challenges many old assumptions. An apologetic and sympathetic tone is incorporated into Grant's analysis on behalf of the missions. He claims the mission schools acted no differently than their counter parts in the wider Canadian society. He sees evidence of syncretism not as a rejection of Christianity, but as an attempt to appropriate it on Indian terms. Indian resistance is seen not directed to Christianity, but to the cultural genocide which often accompanied it.

Moon of Wintertime is written in the graceful literary style of the narrative historical tradition. Grant would not have compromised this style had he chosen to weave into this narrative the insights now being harvested from the ethno-historical approach gaining wide currency in the study of frontier crosscultural contact. Grant provides an index and chapter endnotes but this does not compensate for the omission of a separate bibliography. As a comprehensive work, *Moon of Wintertime* fails, but as "an initial effort to stimulate further study and inevitable revision of its conclusion" (Preface), it succeeds.

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Kabotie, Michael (Lomawywesa): *Migration Tears: Poems About Transitions*. (Native American Series Number 7.) Los Angeles: UCLA American Indian Studies Center, 1987, viii + 54 pp., Illus., Glossary. US \$10.00 + \$1.75 Postage (paper), ISBN 0-955626-52-8.

Migration Tears: Poems About Transitions is a collection of thirty-four poems by Michael Kabotie (Lomawywesa), a Hopi Indian. The collection also includes a sampling of Kabotie's art, a glossary of terms, and a foreward by Kenneth Lincoln. Through his artistry, Kabotie skillfully presents his experience as an Indian in the milieu between past and future, between the historical Indian civilization and modern western civilization. There are many possible responses for people in such a position, but Kabotie's is one of spirit and wit. His images are explicit, captivating, and dialectic in their description of the Indian experience.

Drums continue
snowflakes enter

to touch softly on
 mosaic floor
 patterned with

 footprints of
 long ago
 tribolites

"Tribolite Flakes" (p. 44)

The theme of the collection is found in "Between", the final poem in the collection. In this work he addresses his existence and the existence of his people from the vantage point of the present, drawing on the experience of history, and anticipating the future. He attempts to draw the past and the future together with the present into one.

From here I begin
 and will end my journey

today I am somehow
 between the beginning and
 the end.

"Between" (p. 53)

His concept of the Indian existence in relation to that of the American culture has an eternal quality. While it has come in conflict with the harsh realities of American culture through the ideologies of the "American Dream" and "Manifest Destiny", Kabotie believes in the superiority of the Indian culture and predicts its resurgence.

a flower of that
 rising sun blooms
 among glitters
 of neon ocean ripples
 asphalt faults
 supposedly driving that
 golden state towards
 the ancient orient
 but that flower
 and answer to dreamer's dream

"Flowers of the Rising Sun" (pp. 25-26)

Finally, in "Transistor Windows" Kabotie presents the beauty, serenity, and eternal quality of the Hopi tradition in contrast with the shallowness and

confusion of American culture.

The blue of evening creeps
over the mesas and apartment
dwellings of the Hopi as
children play and shout in
the cool of purple dusk.

Lovely young American maidens sell us
the stunned viewer on the secrets of
youth, as my aging mother and aunt
chuckle and crack Hopi jokes.

Caught between the two windows I pondered
the confusion and hunger of the modern
transistor Hopi.

"Transistor Windows" (p. 33-36)

Michael Kabotie is a skilled poet and artist who, through this collection, provides a deeper insight into the pain of migration and the experience of transition known by Indian people. *Migration Tears: Poems About Transitions* is a collection well worth reading.

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McCue, H.A. (Editor): *Establishing Pathways to Excellence in Indian Education: Selected Papers from the First Mokakit Conference. July 1984.* Vancouver: Mokakit Indian Education Research Association, 1986, 142 pp.

Since 1972 when the National Indian Brotherhood published Indian Control of Indian Education, schooling of Indian children has figured prominently in the efforts of First Nations to achieve real decision-making power over political and social institutions which influence Indian life. The organization of the Mokakit Education Research Association in 1983 may be seen to represent one of the necessary steps along the way to achieving this end as Indian educators joined together to share their research so that a critical Indian view might be more powerfully presented in the study of Indian education.

Establishing Pathways to Excellence in Indian Education is a collection of eleven selected papers which were presented at the first Mokakit (A Blackfoot

word meaning "to strive for wisdom") conference held at the University of Western Ontario in the summer of 1984.

The assembled essays address a wide range of educational topics which will be useful to those who are interested in issues related to Indian education. Some may find it disconcerting that the editor has not seen fit to arrange the papers in any topical order of presentation; as they are, the organizing structure is allowed to stand on the basis of alphabetical order of the researchers' names. The diversity of papers, particularly in an area as complex as education, dictates a much more considered approach.

If the collection may be said to have a general theme, it is the recognition of the necessity to make all aspects of the schooling process conform to the cultural and academic needs of Indian children so that they might have the opportunity to grow and develop within the context of their own living circumstance and heritage. This agenda stands in stark contrast to that of the past when Indian children were expected to adapt to meet the institutional goals of the school and the foreign culture which it served. Of course, a central element in achieving this policy change is the gaining of meaningful control over the schools by Indian people. The article by Verna Kirkness addresses this problem; she states that since 1972, Indian Bands and the Department of Indian Affairs have not been able to agree on what control actually means and that no mechanism has been established to enable the transition of power from the federal government to the local community. Citing statistics which she says provide ample evidence that the current situation is untenable, Kirkness calls on Indian researchers to "first document the existing state of Indian education; we must identify policies required to accomodate the policy; and we must identify legislation which will enable the shift of the control to occur" (p. 78).

Jo-ann Archibald's contribution shows what can be accomplished within the existing structure of Indian education. She provides an interesting case study of the curriculum innovations among the Sto:lo people of British Columbia. Her account briefly summarizes the planning, development, and implementation stages of the Sto:lo Sitel curriculum. (The latter had been a demanding process of nearly ten years duration by the time the paper was written.) The description provides a valuable insight into Native curriculum development.

June Wyatt-Benyon relates the difficulties encountered at the Mr. Currie Indian Community School between the locally-educated teaching staff, the local school board, and the community. Data gathered through a series of interviews revealed a breakdown in communication among the various participants, all of whom are essential to the educational process if the integrity of the community school model is to be preserved. The problem concerned the apparent necessity "to integrate Anglo role relationships into the prevailing traditional Native role relationships" (p. 128). The article points to the need to constantly strive to bring the various constituencies of the educational enterprise together so that they may work toward achieving their common purpose, that of providing the most appropriate educational experience possible to children.

The question of deciding what constitutes the best possible learning en-

vironment for schools raises concerns about quality of education. Arthur More, examining this in his survey of recent evaluations of Indian schools, finds that in every study quality of education is not defined and he takes issue with the fact the provincial standards, which all of the studies he examined used for comparison purposes, are not necessarily appropriate to Indian education. The paper considers a number of factors which must be weighed before valid evaluations of Indian schools are undertaken.

Specific mention should also be made of Barbara Burnaby's article on Indian language retention in Canada which she has quantified using data supplied through the 1981 census. She finds a clear trend toward the replacement of Native mother tongue by English and French and urges the immediate development of programs to address the tendency not only in schools but in other social institutions as well.

Other papers in the collection are concerned with the cultural bias of intelligence testing, the relationship of teacher attitude and student success, and the problem of the discord between the traditional mode of Indian behaviour (silence perceived as passivity) and the expectations placed on these people when they enter post-secondary institutions where they are expected to be active and talkative.

There are shortcomings in the presentation of this slim volume; not all of the articles will satisfy the standards expected by many social scientists. That being said, it does contain thoughtful perspectives which will prove useful to researchers in the area of Indian education.

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Shilling, Arthur: *The Ojibway Dream*. Montreal: Tundra Books, 1986, 48 pp., \$29.95, ISBN 0-88776-173-9.

When Ojibway artist, Arthur Shilling, died in the spring of 1986 at the age of forty-five, Canada lost one of its most eminent painters and Native people lost a major champion in the struggle to reaffirm the value of Native identity. Arthur's special gift as an artist was his immense talent for portraiture. He liked to share this gift with friends and relatives at home on the Rama Reserve in Southern Ontario. It was here amid the trees that he built his great log home and three storey studio, and it was here too that he painted with such passion the familiar faces of the people he loved and knew so well. Today, many of these portraits grace the walls of galleries, museums and private homes throughout

the country. As a body of work they constitute an impressive visual archive, but Arthur's work is not about documenting genealogies. It's about capturing on canvas the essence of living people. It's about revealing warmth and inner beauty. It's about portraying strength and courage in the face of adversity. It's about being Ojibway. Above all it's about an artist's mystical relationship with colour.

For much of his life Arthur was not a well man. He was certainly not as strong physically as many of his self-portraits would at first suggest. Rheumatic fever in childhood left him with a weakened heart which major surgery at the age of thirty-five temporarily improved. In the years that followed he was forced to alternate intensive periods of painting with extended stays in the hospital. This pattern was to continue until the time of his death. During those final years the spectre of death was a constant companion watching over his shoulder while he poured his diminished energy into each commission still outstanding and each project yet unfinished. One such project, very near completion when he died, was a volume of poetic remembrance and personal reflection accompanying a collection of twenty-one oil paintings reproduced in full colour. This book, *The Ojibway Dream*, has now been published posthumously as a memorial to the artist.

It is at once a fitting and unique memorial. The paintings and lyrical prose form a revealing self-portrait of a man acutely aware of his own mortality. Consequently, the brief text speaks with increasing urgency of those things which the artist considered to be of primary importance and about which he felt most deeply. The portfolio of paintings which complements the poetic passages is superbly reproduced with all the vitality and brilliance of the original oils. Still, this book is more than a handsome tribute to a gifted artist gone too soon, for it provides added insight into the creative mind as well. Most visual artists are too involved in their work to reflect upon it to any degree, let alone write about it with any skill. Arthur Shilling has chosen to do both, recording his thoughts and feelings with remarkable candor and sensitivity, and rooting them firmly in the Native experience. But then, the Native experience is the only context in which he could have expressed himself, so profoundly did it affect his life as an artist. He saw his life unfolding as a sacred dream, an Ojibway dream. In this dreamlife he was called by the Creator, Manitou, to portray the greatness of the Ojibway people using the sacred gift given to him at birth the ability to see colour with spiritual intensity. Shilling felt he was "to reveal their spiritual soul, the quietness that makes us different, that no other nation or people have" (p. 22). This would in turn inspire in them a new spirit of togetherness and pride in being Ojibway.

Shilling's dedication to this ideal was complete. He firmly believed that the artist could play a special role in the process of cultural revitalization. "Artists may be the only ones God can identify with, all the Great Spirit can look to to represent him" (p. 44). This is accomplished in part by preserving the purity of vision that is uniquely Ojibway. "The Indian spirit, the Indian eye is still free, uncontaminated. And that's what I'm trying to maintain" (p. 32). Arthur had an intense need to paint. Nothing afforded him more satisfaction, and he

never failed to receive ample inspiration from those around him. "I can hear the beauty, smell it like sweetgrass burning, the sound of my people. Their cries mix in with my paint and propel my brush. What else could bring reds and blues so clear, such as I have never seen before?" (p. 20)

Colour fascinated Shilling. He was in awe of its power to transform life and he strove to find metaphors which could communicate the depths to which he had been affected by it. "When I was born, mother earth was bleeding. That's when I started to see color. That's when the dream began" (p. 4). As a young boy seeing colour made him forget his fears. For a time he was frightened that there was no form, but then he saw that form and light was coming from within, and he understood there was "immortality in color".

Immortality notwithstanding, Arthur was painfully aware that the healing properties of colour could do little to repair a physically damaged heart. He said there was not enough color to subdue "the shadows within me." Consequently, he worked under constant pressure from within and compensated for the constraints imposed on him by time by striving to view the world more intently. "I try and see with a thousand eyes. I don't close my eyes except when I sleep, and then there are dreams, color again" (p. 14).

Of the twenty-one paintings reproduced here, eight are of women, eight of children and five of men, two being self-portraits. The portraits of women especially seem to glow with an inner spiritual light and that "quietness that makes us different". The faces of the children whom he loved to paint reflect the mixture of innocence and wonder, apprehension and hope. They are the hope for the future of the Ojibway people. The two self-portraits stand in marked contrast to one another. One is a dark and brooding study of a very weary man, exhausted by the constant struggle for enough energy to paint. Sadness is mixed with shadow and even the brightest colours seem strangely muted. The other is a personal and artistic triumph chosen as the final portrait in the book. It is the image that remains with the reader. No dimensions are given, but it appears to have been created on a grand scale to reflect a grand theme. Here the artist rises almost ghostlike from a maze of vaguely defined figures and mask-like faces in the lower half of the painting to tower above them all like a giant, boldly defiant and fully realized in the upper half, silhouetted against a swirling mandella of red and gold. Almost carnival-like in conception and colouring, it pulses with energy and reflected light.

Immortality may not be entirely out of the question. Arthur Shilling has bequeathed to us a legacy of beauty which continues to radiate its own inner life. This may have been on the artist's mind when he wrote, "My pillow is a burning log. You could rake the coals over my body. Death will not put this fire out" (p. 28). These words took on an added poignancy when they were read aloud at Arthur's funeral.

Two criticisms of the book come to mind. First, the complete lack of documentation of the paintings is most regrettable. It would have been helpful to know something about these paintings, such as their size, when they were painted, who the subjects are and their present location. Secondly, the weight and size of the typeface chosen for the main body of text seems entirely in-

appropriate for the material. It is much too large and bold to properly reflect the intimate and sometimes fragile thoughts of the writer. From a purely esthetic point of view the text is too prominent and visually distracting beside the portraits.

The definitive retrospective exhibitions and critical evaluations of Arthur Shilling's work have yet to be written. For now, this thin volume offers the best presentation of his work available in print. However, the reader is also directed to the excellent film documentary "The Beauty of My People: The Life, Work and Times of Arthur Shilling". Originally released by the National Film Board of Canada in 1977, it is now available on video from CBC Enterprises.

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