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Author

Hauck, Shirley A.

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Raven Tells Stories: An Anthology of Alaskan Native Writing. Edited By Joseph Bruchac, with an introduction by James Ruppert. New York: Greenfield Review Press, 1991. 240 pages. \$12.95 paper.

Contact and resultant culture change supply common threads knitting together recent works of contemporary Alaska Native poets, playwrights, and authors in *Raven Tells Stories*. This important anthology allows Alaska Native writers to reach a wider audience at last. Many works in the anthology have previously appeared only in small regional publications. A special issue of *Alaska Quarterly Review* (1986: 4:3 and 4) and this new work represent the few multiethnic anthologies of creative writings by Alaska Natives currently in publication.

Another strong point in the anthology's favor is that it presents younger writers' works alongside those of mature authors. That presentational concept offers both breadth of experience and depth of craft in this forum for twenty-three different native storytellers.

As a contribution to American native studies, this volume can be evaluated in several ways: poetically, editorially, and culturally. Poetically, for casual readers, pieces in this anthology supply many intricate images of contemporary Alaska Native life. Poignant views into writers' personal nativeness emerge from their verbal mosaics. Images of ancestors dance festively alongside the painful quests of recovering alcoholics for their lost cultural identities.

For example, Agpik-Robert Mulluk, Jr.'s very compelling poem "Kobuk Lake Beckons" (p. 143) serves an exciting twofold purpose. Ice speaks. For nonnatives his haunting poetry illustrates in modern terms the old Eskimo personification of natural forces. He also communicates poignantly to readers the native awareness and love of natural forces expressed through cycling. Through Mulluk's work, readers feel Ice's importance. Without it, water would not visit the northland in the same way; ice fishing and sealing would be impossible; quite simply, life could not exist, "[b]ecause the real people [Iñupiaqs] need me [Ice] to survive" (p. 143).

Often, however, an oppressiveness bordering on hostility jars the reading experience in *Raven Tells Stories*. This occurs in part because the volume seems wrinkled editorially. The diplomatic arrangement of works alphabetically by author falls short, partially because three of the first five writers are southeast Alaska Natives who tend toward adversarial expressions of their relationships with acculturation. Readers who like to experience

books from front to back may be overwhelmed in gloom and guilt; in addition, this pattern makes the book appear to emphasize southeast Alaskan writers. Indeed, 42 percent of the book is devoted to southeastern works. Athabascan and Iñupiaq authors split most of the remainder.

Alphabetical arrangement by author also causes a lack of continuity among the works, both ethnically and stylistically. Had Bruchac arranged the works alphabetically by author under cultural classifications (e. g., Aleut, Athabascan, Iñupiaq, Tlingit, Yup'ik), both the continuity and the emphasis problems could have been avoided. Then the book would have followed the bad news letter principle: beginning positively, airing the bad news quickly, and reestablishing equanimity with readers by ending on a nostalgic note. Contemporary readers long ago abandoned the Victorian fluff approach to literature and poetry. Nonetheless, pathos is more readily accepted when occasional notes of levity lighten the load.

The anthology's apt title derives from Robert Davis's poem on a Tlingit legend, but it also reflects the respect that all Alaska Natives hold for Raven, the trickster of their creation stories. The Tlingit mask on the cover, however, belies the book's southeastern emphasis. The editor could have circumvented this problem easily by using dual cover pieces. Facing off a starkly realistic, black Iñupiaq raven mask against the intricately stylized, colorful Tlingit raven mask would have underlined visually some of the exciting differences between southeastern Indian and northern Eskimo expressive modes.

The inclusion of works by two Aleut poets in this collection is most commendable. Too often Aleut artistry gets overlooked in folk and fine arts genres. Unfortunately, the community of Yup'ik Eskimo writers is underrepresented in this volume. Only two authors included in the work could be considered Yup'ik, and even they are from border towns lying along the Yup'ik-Iñupiaq linguistic division line. Possibly, people at such contact points do not express what it is to be Yup'ik in the same way that Yukon-Kuskokwim core Yup'ik people might.

Elsie Mather of Bethel has written some exquisitely moving prose that has been appreciated in various forums throughout the state of Alaska. Harold Napoleon, another Yup'ik writer, has been invited to read his works at many recent public and private gatherings. Works by both of these authors would have fit well into the effects-of-culture-change theme of *Raven Tells Stories*.

Adding only these two authors would have doubled the Yup'ik offerings presented. Interest in creative writing has burgeoned recently in the Yup'ik region. Perhaps in subsequent publications we can look forward to seeing more works by talented Yup'ik writers.

Roy N. Henry's poem "Inuit" is printed in Iñupiaq and translated as "The People" on the facing page (pp. 82–83), a nice touch. Nonnative comprehension of poetic pieces could have been improved further by universally footnoted translations of native terms.

Raven Tells Stories may become germane to comparative cross-cultural studies in Native American scholarship. For example, it might be worthwhile to compare Colby's quarter-century-old findings on conceptual domains in Eskimo folktales (*Science* 151 [1966], pp. 793–98) with those of contemporary Iñupiaq Eskimo storytellers represented in *Raven Tells Stories*. Perhaps contact, the use of English language, or some other variable has significantly changed the frequency of time and search words at story beginnings that Colby noted for the Eskimo. A preliminary assessment of Iñupiaq works presented in *Raven Tells Stories* indicates that Colby's observations of Eskimo concern with individual ability and action orientation may now have shifted to a more inactive, cerebral nostalgia for the past.

Those interested in exploring in-group punning might analyze theatrical puns and metaphors in Nora Dauenhauer's clever "just-so" story "Raven, King Salmon, and the Birds: A Play" (pp. 32–40). In it she allegorizes the founding of the Alaska Native Brotherhood by means of a tale about the Alaska Native Birds. Both groups are appointed by a powerful entity as liaisons to the people, and both groups ingeniously sport the acronym ANB.

Sometimes clever, sometimes haunting, Mary TallMountain's contributions display her considerable writing skill in subjects as diverse as cycling, heritage, adoption, and animism. Rich with irony, her parody (p. 197) of classic white concepts of Athabaskan pidgin English in an Alaskan setting expresses artfully the native nostalgia for the old ways and native wishes for respect.

Raven Tells Stories might also provide a springboard for applying Berry's ecological model of cross-cultural psychology (*Netherlands Journal of Psychology* 30 [1975], pp. 51–84) to culture contact outcomes for the diverse groups represented in the anthology. Fieldwork among the Temne and the Eskimo supplied some of the impetus behind Berry's personality model. Different acculturative

stress and alienation patterns are expressed vividly in *Raven's* Eskimo and Indian writings. For example, Josephine Huntington Field's "The Other Side of Amber" (p. 70) reflects Athabascan nostalgia for ancient ways, a traditional behavior component in Berry's terms.

We forget and drums grow silent
Amber flows in polluted streams now
Only echoes of merry laughter
will be our legacy.

Writing with a maturity beyond her years, Mary Lockwood runs the gamut of emotions in the contact situations that formed her world. Her grandmother's Eskimo community is exhilarated over an Inupiaq hunter's ability to vanquish with his harpoon the first flying machine ever seen on the tundra (p. 102). In another poem, "Paul" (pp. 103–106), the whole community mourns a native life lost through the intervention of white society, however innocently, in the native world: A poor near-orphan boy drowns trying out the ice skates that his sympathetic teacher gave him as a special Christmas gift.

Finally, Edgar Jackson/Anawrok (p. 97) beautifully and positively amalgamates into culture change his Inupiaq view of past, present, and future.

I can look back
not in anger or hate
but with respect for my people
myself
for believing in our traditions
accepting the changes
as the world passes into confusion
as we pass in silence towards freedom—
the freedom of choice.

Shirley A. Hauck
University of Alaska, Anchorage
Folklore North