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mative consciousness required to move into the realm of the positive. Ortiz's preoccupation with both American Indians and disabled veterans are, in this sense, merely the lensmatic tools of comparison and explanation deployed to this end.

Insofar as the unstated objective of *From Sand Creek* is to provide an expressive vehicle through which the need for universal liberation may be posited and understood, Ortiz's project has been exceedingly ambitious. To the extent that it attains its goal it transcends its poetic medium. Such transcendence is, of course, the acid test of whether any given body of verse is only very good, or whether it has made the leap into the rarified ranks of that poetry which is "great." This effort by Simon Ortiz must be accorded the latter distinction.

Such is the compelling quality of the work that we are inevitably drawn to share wholeheartedly in the essence of the author's vision, his dream:

That dream  
shall have a name  
after all,  
and it will not be vengeful  
but wealthy with love  
and compassion  
and knowledge.  
And it will rise  
in this heart  
which is our America.

Ward Churchill  
University of Colorado, Boulder

**Seasonal Woman.** By Luci Tapahonso. Santa Fe, NM: Tooth of Time Books, 1982. 72 pp. \$5.00 Paper.

Luci Tapahonso is a Navajo woman from Shiprock, Navajo Nation and has two daughters whose father is Earl Ortiz, an artist and the brother of Simon J. Ortiz, the Acoma Pueblo writer. *Seasonal Woman* is Tapahonso's second book of poems, *One More Shiprock Night* being the other which is now out of print. *Seasonal Woman* is illustrated with drawings by R. C. Gorman, Jr., the acclaimed Navajo artist living in Taos, New Mexico. Gorman's

drawings are not only on the subject of Navajo women but also complement the poems, especially the one depicting an infant at a mother's breast which faces the poem "Misty Dawn at Feeding Time."

*Seasonal Woman* is introduced by John Nichols, the recognized novelist residing in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Nichols' observation that Tapahonso's poetry is "both powerful and extraordinarily gentle" is true to the Navajo content, and presence, in each poem in the volume. While Tapahonso's self-image in *Seasonal Woman* is that of a "content" mother, wife, sister, friend . . . , she also vigorously points out the daily atrocities of racism, colonialism, etc., which are inflicted upon her People and other socially, economically and politically exploited people in the world. Yet, as Nichols also points out, Tapahonso's words are not "bitter" but are "dignified and lyrical," and this gives cause for the "glory" of her People's resistance and to "rejoice."

As a poet my interest in *Seasonal Woman* concerns the poetics and its implementation in this volume. In "Listen," Tapahonso comes closest to making a statement on poetics in the quote which starts this poem. While the quote encompasses the world of Native Americans, its statement that "There's something/wrong if a man can't sing in Indian" can take on universal proportions. For singing, like writing and other forms of expression, is a two-way channel of communication.

As Tapahonso writes in "Listen,"

I tell my daughters:

\*

. . . be still and listen. . . .  
. . . let the song come inside you. . . .

\*

It helps you grow strong, feel good about yourself.

\*

. . . see how he looks into your face as he sings  
notice the rises and falls of his voice  
the vibrations inside. . . .

In order for the communication to take place, the receiver must be both inactive ("still") and active (listening); and the sender of the poetry must also have the same balance of "negative capability" (John Keats). On organic imagination Samuel Coleridge stated that the seed of poetry sowed in a fertile mind blooms

most abundantly, so Tapahonso advises her children to "let the song come inside you," "It helps you grow." Tapahonso's poetics also parallels Ezra Pound's notion of verse lines which reflect a poet's rhythms of thought when she writes "notice the rises and falls of his voice/ the vibrations inside." In this sense of poetry the poem resides in the life of the poet and to understand the poem the reader must let that life inside—the way both the singer sings and the listener hears from within, where all human understanding gravitates.

While Tapahonso's poetics embraces modern notions of poetry, her poetry also maintains contact with the oral traditions of the Navajo and other people who value the spoken word. This connection to the spoken language is not simply the incorporation of oral exclamations like "t'aa 'aanii 'adishi!" or "K'adi K'adi!" which appear in "Dear Buddy," a touching poem concerning the poet's living relationship with her deceased brother—for the Navajo language is also a written language. The continuity of Tapahonso's poetry with the spoken word is not limited to using English words for Navajo expression, e.g., coffee that has "kick," as little uncle Tom Jim says in "Hills Brothers Coffee." Nor is her poetry limited to "Navajo" English syntax, e.g., in "Shepherd Blues,"

This friend [pause]  
haven't seen for a year or two.  
It was a good surprise.  
Took her downtown  
to catch the next bus  
to Gallup.

or

I kept worrying about my sheep  
if they were okay  
really missed them,  
the long days in the sun.

What is most revealing of the oral component of Tapahonso's poetry is how she shapes many, though not all, of her poems in the way a thought or feeling emerges and grows from the mind. Rather than having a written structure imposed on the expression, Tapahonso allows the expression to take shape as if spoken. For example, in "Shifty Eyes and Earth Women," the expression

is sprung on its own impulse, then it takes form as its energy rises and diminishes, expands and contracts, when mind and tongue are in coordination:

these women of the desert  
endurance and strength  
sometimes they smile easily  
strands of hair  
blowing loose above  
colors of shawls  
colors of sunset  
colors of sunrise  
colors of shiprock

here the images of shiprock women  
take form inside the hogan  
when he is not drawing  
naked white women stretching  
with shifty eyes and large loose hats.

This shaping of a poem echoes how a Navajo ceremony can shape a song to fit a religious occasion in that the relationship between the poet and the audience influences how a poem will be shaped, e.g. "A Prayer."

It would not be correct to think that all of Tapahonso's poems are in step with traditions, modern or ancient. Many of her poems, for instance, move contrary to "standard" usage taught frequently in English composition classes and these poems could not be translated into proper Navajo, e.g., in "There Have Been Nights,"

There have been nights  
I sang '49 songs  
volcano cliffs, south mountain  
red rocks park, summit, stone house  
those times stomping the ground  
I saw my voice rising out of me  
drifting mingling with bonfire smoke  
such a powerful feeling like that  
there have been nights  
I sat alone on the living room couch  
with willie nelson/ don williams crooning

it's not supposed to be this way  
in semi-darkness  
ring phone ring ring  
I need a voice to talk to now  
tell me that story again about your horses  
weren't their names bill and charley?  
tell me stories about anything  
anything on nights like this

Such a deliberate use of non-standard English is not only a sign of rebellion or a signal for change. It is also a statement that poetry is a way to use language to express what grammar, syntax and punctuation cannot convey. Standard English could explain the fragmented memories strung together late at night when a poet is alone, feeling lonely for a special person's affections connected to certain songs long ago, so that she can live through the tomorrows of her life. But standard English would be inadequate in creating the same experience that the poem or song offers the reader.

If there are any points of criticism for *Seasonal Woman*, they are few and weak. For the poetics of *Seasonal Woman* there are indeed few criticisms. *Seasonal Woman* well deserves the Honorable Mention it received in 1983 for an American Book Award and indicates what can be expected in the future from Luci Tapahonso.

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**She Had Some Horses.** By Joy Harjo. New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1983. 80 pp. \$6.95 Paper.

Most personal, most startling of her work to date, Joy Harjo's third collection of poems is an affirmation of life. The first section is a cathartic and determined, angry self-discovery. The second is a non-accusative philosophical resignation. The last is devoted to the Horses, metaphor for the People whom she has discovered in multiplicities of injustice and pain. In the final poem, "I Give You Back," she relinquishes fear.

Reviewing her earlier collection, *What Moon Drove Me To This* (I. Reed, 1981), Geary Hobson said (*Greenfield Review*, 1981) Joy's