

not overdone, and there are glimpses of the social life of the industry's workers, at work and outside it (one of my favourites is a man posing for the camera with an oolichan between his teeth, p. 124).

There is thus a tension at the heart of the book, between the photographs and the text, and between the Native, European, and Asian men and women who harvested and processed the resource and the businesses and governments that controlled and abused it. In the book it is a creative tension; whether it will be so in reality remains to be seen.

*Trent University*

JAMES R. CONLEY

*On the Translation of Native American Literatures*, edited by Brian Swann. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992. xx, 478 pp. US\$45.00 cloth; US\$19.95 paper.

We learn a lot in editor Brian Swann's prologue to this collection of essays. He tells us of the history of scholarly resistance to acknowledging that Native peoples had literatures of significance and how recognition of those literatures made us aware of the need for techniques and understandings that would allow them to be translated. Swann leaves no doubt that the world needs a book that provides a history of our developing ability to do sensitive cross-cultural translation and a theory-driven "how-to manual" for doing it. This book was supposed to fulfil both those needs. He sent out hundreds of letters to individuals, organizations, and journal readers, inviting essays on "any aspect of [translation] that interests you," and from the essays that were submitted he chose those included in this sourcebook on the translation of Native American literatures.

The responses to that process of invitation were edited into a book with a lot of promise but, frankly, diffuse and rather disappointing substance. The essays are of very uneven quality. Remember that this is not a new field. There has been scholarly interest in "Amerindian texts" for a century. And, although this interest hid away for generations as a recondite aspect of ethnography and comparative lit, it burst out during the 1950s and 1960s to express itself in studies of "ways of speaking," cultural narrative and discourse, traditional poetry, ethno-poetics and rhetoric, and verbal performance art. Names of the great and famous in this field (Hymes, Rothenberg, Tedlock, Swann, Sherzer, Krupat) leap out of the table of contents, suggesting that if there are understandings of importance or late-breaking news in the

theory and practice of translation, we will find it here. Furthermore, this isn't Swann's first effort at collecting articles and editing a volume in this area. He and Arnold Krupat put together *Recovering the Word* in 1987. In light of that experience, and because he had control over the selection and editorial process, one might have hoped that the outcome would have been a set of essays providing a focused synthesis of the theoretical and procedural understandings that we have developed up to this point. What we have, with a few delightful exceptions, are a collection of reminiscence and research reports, ephemera that provide us with analysed texts, and the analyst's experience of discovery. Don't get me wrong! There are enabling theoretical and practical nuggets here — a few of the essays deserve to be recognized as classics. And there are other helpful insights tucked here and there in the 500 or so pages of this book. But (here's an opinion; as reviewer, I get to make claims, too!), many of these essays belong in the periodical literature of our various fields, and this book is less than it could have been because it didn't take itself seriously enough. Swann had the opportunity to provide us with a state-of-the-art review of a field that's hard to keep up with. But this book isn't it.

Some of the articles have lasting value. Arnold Krupat's show-me-the-good-parts history of translation of Amerindian song and stories is helpful and, along with William Clements' essay on Native American literature and Euroamerican translation, gives an overview of the history of the endeavour. Rothenberg, voluble as ever, adds to this history a discussion of the "problematics" of translation. Later Dale Kinkade gives a succinct example of reconstructing understandings from a text in an extinct language (Pentlatch). There are no essays by First Nations writers, reinforcing our awareness of the "crisis of representation," the out-of-date but continuing tradition that non-Native writers are continuing to collect, interpret, and present the perspective and history of Native communities. It is important to recognize, of course, that individual readers may bring their own idiosyncratic needs and interests to this book; and they may find answers and inspiration here that works for them.

*University of British Columbia*

J.V. (JAY) POWELL