

and "Indian Spirit Word."

Looking Through a Squared Off Circle, graced by an appropriate cover drawing by Paul War Cloud, includes explanatory notes and biographical data on the poet. The strength of Brito's collection lies in its connectiveness with the essence of the traditional, as well as the current, American Indian experience. Brito's poems are strong: authentic in voice, intense in imagery. With the twenty two poems in this collection, Brito whets the reader's appetite for more.

— Theresa E. McCormick
Iowa State University

Lloyd W. Brown. *West Indian Poetry*. 2nd edition. (Exeter, NH: Heinemann, 1984) 202 pp., \$15.00 paper.

From the outset, the reader must be aware of encountering a rarity indeed: a first class scholar who can write objectively and at the same time maintain his involvement with the literature under scrutiny. One would seem to negate the other. But Brown successfully manages each; as a Jamaican, he holds Caribbean literature dear to his literary heart. Yet his claim to scholarship may not be denied, as a perusal of this book will confirm. Brown knows his subject thoroughly, and in scholarly fashion has been able to distance himself sufficiently from the material to present a firm and fair evaluation of *West Indian Poetry*. The book comes near to being a variorum edition in that he offers both a "Chronology" of West Indian history, including both relevant events and works of poets, dating from 1759 to 1981, and a first rate "Bibliography" of primary and secondary sources. All entries are briefly annotated.

In his "Preface" Brown discusses what he perceives to be the major flaw in literary criticism of Caribbean poets: critics tend to be viewed historically and pushed into tidy little literary movements rather than developmentally; that is, by the manner in which they define themselves. Brown has looked at the poets' works and has considered how the poet has contributed or failed to contribute to the development of a West Indian consciousness. This is not to say that he has ignored literary movements; in fact, he has found that so long as the Caribbean poet attempted to write in the "British" manner, following for example neo-classicism, his poetry remained inferior. Likewise when the poet attempted superficially to include the native dialects, the poetry also failed. It is only as the poet has been able to find the language and

rhythms of the island peoples that the poetry has gained stature. In itself this idea is not novel; however, Brown has included so many excerpts from the poetry itself along with his interpretations that the reader must forget the cliché and agree with the author's evaluations.

Although Brown has arranged his work historically, he has a primary and certainly valid thesis that undergirds the whole. As the West Indian poet takes his place in the sun, he must deal honestly with his own identity — not British, not African, but someone combining both, yet very different. And the best poets find a way to reconcile or transcend the contradictions. Brown looks at minor and major poets, finding that West Indian poetry is “still a young tradition of poetry,” and that it does have something unique to offer to the poetic world. Perhaps one of the most insightful accomplishments of the book is the chapter-long treatment of both Derek Walcott and Edward Brathwaite. He finds Walcott's perspective to be a private one, while Brathwaite's is a communal and cyclical one. As fine as Brown's literary criticism of each poet is, his comparison of the two alone makes this book abundantly worth the reading.

I found the volume exceedingly well-written, enlightening, and most informed. Brown's fresh perspective makes this an especially valuable addition to the relatively few critical books on West Indian poetry.

— LaVerne Gonzalez
San Jose State University

Joseph Bruchac, ed. *The Light From Another Country: Poetry From American Prisons.* (Greenfield Center, N.Y.: The Greenfield Review Press, 1984) xxvi, 326 pp., \$9.95 paper.

In recent years, poetry anthologists have strayed from the literary field into the terrain of sociology, where they have collected an odd assortment of scriblings: poems focusing on female athletes, the children of alcoholics, Vietnam War veterans, gays and lesbians, scuba divers, and numerous other ethnic, social, and occupational groups. In fact, the proliferation of such anthologies has been so great that absurdity long ago set in and one expects shortly to see collections devoted to hangnail sufferers and carpet layers.

It is into the midst of this clutter that Joseph Bruchac has placed his anthology of prison poetry, and so one may be inclined to dismiss his book as just another manifestation of the urge to specialize. That would be a sad mistake, because Bruchac's collection is that rare thing these days, an anthology of poems with a meaningful and compelling co-