Perception and Imagination: A Note on Seven Arrows
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In the Spring 1980 issue of the ASAIL Newsletter, Lowell Jaeger contributed a balanced and concise overview of the controversy about Hyemeyohsts Storm's Seven Arrows. In general I agree with his conclusions. Nevertheless, Jaeger overlooks two aspects of Storm's opening pages that deserve careful attention: Storm's emphasis on the significance of unique perceptions and the use of imagination.

Beginning on page 4, Storm uses the hypothetical example of a circle of people observing an eagle feather. He notes that physical circumstances and previous experiences shape each observer's perception of the feather. He then extrapolates: if perceptions of a "tangible thing" can vary markedly, then it's logical to assume that perceptions of entities as complex and changeable as the culture of a people can vary dramatically. Later in the introductory pages (page 11), Storm also reveals his reliance on the imagination, molded by his perceptions and experience. He states that many of the stories that follow were taught to him by "my Fathers and Grandfathers," but others are "new Stories that I have written from within my own Understanding and Experience." The importance of both unique perceptions and the imagination is expressed forcefully in Storm's initial paragraphs addressed to "Dear Reader": "All things that we perceive stimulate our individual imaginations in different ways, which in turn causes us to create our own unique interpretations of them" (p. 4).

Jaeger would probably argue that Storm's brief statements about perception and imagination are too slim to outweigh the other sins of omission and commission committed by Storm and his publisher throughout the rest of the book. And Jaeger's argument would be valid. But
in fairness to Storm, his critics should at least concede that Storm did warn his Dear Reader that the voice of one person, shaped by particular perceptions and imagination, should not be heard as the voice of a People.

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Duane Niatum's Digging Out the Roots is a rewarding book, though it is an uneven one. He has never been an easy poet, and a number of the poems here are too idiosyncratic, too personal for a reader to follow the drift with any reasonable ease. I'm not speaking of the sort of obscurity that comes from a poem being written out of another culture; Niatum's poems don't send a stranger to Klallam life scuttling guiltily to the library to read up on Pacific Northwest shamanism. In fact, when Niatum is drawing upon the Klallam part of his heritage, talking of totems and totem-makers, sea and forest, wet fern and cedar, wolf and raven and owl, the sensuous texture keeps me going gladly, even if the poem be knotty. What makes me fidgety are passages of flashy and unnecessarily obscure imagery, where emotions and events are described so obliquely as almost to seem coy, passages where the language is warmed-over hippy, and places where Niatum's attention to form and rhythm at the expense of other elements makes a poem seem cold.

Still, much of this book is fresh, compelling, moving. Some of the strongest poems are the simplest, like the love lyrics of the section "Cycle For The Woman in the Field":

(I) think of you by the lake,
The night Center Moon wind
Called us to the shore to mate our memories
With the duck's wild courting.
Woman, I have not yet returned to my shadow,
Sleeping under the moontree like a child.
("Secret Meeting")