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REVIEWS

Dreams and Thunder: Stories, Poems, and *The Sun Dance Opera*. By Zitkala-Ša. Edited by P. Jane Hafen. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001. 160 pages. \$22.95 cloth.

P. Jane Hafen's edition of previously unpublished literary works by Zitkala-Ša, the professional name Gertrude Simmons Bonnin chose for herself, is an honest, thoughtful, and thorough work of recovery scholarship and an exciting addition to the available works of early modern indigenous American writers. In the text of this edition, Hafen's introductory and explanatory notes to Zitkala-Ša's writings provide brief, helpful guides to student, scholarly, and lay readers without being intrusive. In the front and back material, Hafen aptly supports these archival stories, poems, and a collaborative opera with biographical, cultural, and literary contexts that squarely face the enigmas and seeming contradictions of the writer's life and works, suggesting logical conclusions, but largely leaving such issues open to interpretation. Thus *Dreams and Thunder* accomplishes the purpose of offering further texts for the study of the literature and biography of Gertrude Bonnin and of classifying and providing a comprehensive scholarly update in those areas.

Hafen begins the edition by clearly outlining her sources and methods, leaving a path for future scholars who may want to read Gertrude Bonnin's correspondence and other personal and professional writings or who might wish to further the available scholarship by reproducing such things as her political writings in a collection. Then she closes the collection with a bibliography and a challenging bibliographic essay that concisely surveys the scholarship to date on the writer, noting significant contributions, limitations in point of view and theoretical applications, and minor errors. This essay and the introduction trace the emerging critical interest in Gertrude Bonnin in the late twentieth century and pull together a view of her life, filling in certain gaps and raising questions that suggest further thought and study. This selection of more surviving texts by the writer than have been previously printed will certainly facilitate the study indicated by these questions.

Since narrative consistency is primarily a value of Western European fiction, the real life of the Dakota writer who called herself Zitkala-Ša (Red Bird) is filled with paradox and contradiction. However, the meta-discourse about

writers created by critics need not be shy about addressing inconsistencies and their role in the writer's life and in literature. Hafen does not sidestep this challenge. For instance, she presents openly and honestly what must have been a deep conflict for Gertrude Bonnin between her disdain for and anger at her own forced assimilation in boarding school and her decision to send her son to a Catholic boarding school. Hafen also points out the fallacies created by oversimplifying Bonnin's privileging of traditional spiritual beliefs over Christianity as she seems to do in her essay "Why I Am a Pagan," later changed to "The Great Spirit," since Bonnin converted later in life to Catholicism and then became associated with the Mormons. Perhaps there was less contradiction among beliefs to the writer than there are to the critics and biographers, but having more of Bonnin's later unpublished works available is a step toward looking at such enigmas in a more complex way.

Perhaps the most controversial of the inclusions is *The Sun Dance Opera* co-authored with William Hanson. Hafen's description of how the music was composed, Bonnin's musical training, and the unwritten presentations by Ute dancers is invaluable in reading this piece of performance art. Further, Hafen helps to clarify Bonnin's relationship to the Sun Dance, which she claims was more important to the Ute people, where she lived at the time when she composed the opera, than to her own Yankton division of the Sioux, with whom she had not lived since she was a child. The use of a sacred ceremony as a backdrop for a romantic work of art is, of course, a sensitive issue, as Hafen observes. Yet the opera exists, and it has something to tell students, critics, and historians about assimilation of Native peoples at this particular time and their relationship to tradition. For instance, Ella Deloria, another Yankton Sioux writer who has been compared to Bonnin, also used the Sun Dance as a backdrop for a romantic tryst in her novel *Waterlily* (1988), which remained an unpublished manuscript from approximately 1944 until the late 1980s (p. xi). However, Deloria's treatment of the Sun Dance ceremony in narrative form, of course, has much more cultural description.

Still the text of the opera and the archival location of the score should be important to scholars working on the history of the popular, early twentieth century movement to adapt and score indigenous music for Euro-American tastes. In the case of the opera, however, instead of a non-Native musicologist transcribing and arranging Native songs, Bonnin translates songs by ear into violin music, which is then transcribed by her collaborator. Unlike popular dramatic entertainment of the time, such as Wild West shows, all the characters in the opera are Native people from particular tribes, even if the original starring performers were not.

Compared to Hollywood film, such as *Rose Marie* (1936), which had earlier been a stage musical, and which came out two years before the last performance of *The Sun Dance Opera* in 1938, the opera's culturally specific Ute dances and the focus of the libretto on Native life and culture is distinct from such Hollywood treatment. In the film, for instance, Native people are portrayed as untrustworthy or as simpletons who supposedly contribute the then-popular theme song "The Indian Love Call" (music by Herbert Slothart and Rudolf Friml with lyrics by Otto Harbach and Oscar Hammerstein II) to the

romance of the main Euro-Canadian characters. Such ridiculous popular music was long recognized in the non-Native public imagination as an aural image representing Native peoples. In addition, dancers in the film perform an outlandishly choreographed corn festival in which it is impossible to understand from the mixture of icons which culture, besides Euro-American, is being represented. In *The Sun Dance Opera* Zitkala-Ša adapts her version of a Western art form to her own purposes, perhaps adding European elements, such as a witch legend, to suit her own narrative purposes. The opera, like the adaptations of her stories, was intended, perhaps, to communicate the richness of indigenous culture in a form non-Native people would appreciate.

In the section on Zitkala-Ša's stories, Hafen invites a comparison between a text "Squirrel Man and His Double," translated by Bonnin, and a text "The Witch Woman," adapted by Bonnin. Besides including thirteen other stories with literary, historical, and biographical notes and adding Zitkala-Ša's own notes, the inclusion of the translation and adaptation allows the reader insight into her writing processes, for Zitkala-Ša is not merely a translator but an artist who can perform her own translations. The variation of styles among the stories is worth further study, as Hafen notes, and the early poetry included here is also part of an emerging picture of Bonnin's evolution as a writer and political activist.

This collection is most welcome by scholars of Native literature, particularly those devoted to early twentieth century writers. However, the presentation of these newly published works also makes them valuable to the novice student or reader. Hafen does not revise or step back from her findings. Her inclusive approach is admirable and may inspire more collections of early writers whose works and lives may be controversial in some way. It would be helpful to scholars and readers to see a volume of John Oskison's (Cherokee) short stories presented in such a manner or the essays and book reviews of Todd Downing (Choctaw). Jane Hafen's edition of Zitkala-Ša's stories, poems, and opera should inspire more scholars to look for treasure in the archives.

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A Fateful Time: The Background and Legislative History of the Indian Reorganization Act. By Elmer R. Rusco. Reno: University of Nevada Press. 2000. 363 pages. \$44.95 cloth.

Using the Wheeler-Howard File in the National Archives Building, as well as the Central Classified Files of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Elmer Rusco adds considerably to an understanding of just how the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) was crafted. Rusco assumes that political ideologies play important roles in determining historic events. This concentration on ideology reveals that two ideologies guided non-Indians' thinking about Indians: the assimilationist ideology and the termination ideology. Following Lewis Meriam's 800-page devastatingly critical report on the state of Indian affairs in 1928, the bureau