

Julian RICE, *Deer Women and Elk Men: The Lakota Narratives of Ella Deloria* (Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1992, 211 p., ISBN 0-8263-1362-0)

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Similarly, Dennis Tedlock gives a playful interpretation of a syncretic Mayan origin myth in "The Story of Evenadam". He presents most of what is going through his head while he is listening to and editing the tape recorded story. Although his presentation is light-hearted, he raises a serious point which is not fully addressed in the work of Hymes. He states, "We seem to have entered a world where *every act of representation is also an act of interpretation.*" Tedlock opens a range of expression for the translator, since to him translation is a creative process. His essay is one of the most thought-provoking in this collection.

This volume provides fresh perspectives which will be of general interest to folklorists, anthropologists and others. The essays are well crafted, with abundant material from actual texts. Each writer takes care to explain the native language texts carefully, and provide adequate basic background information. There is also an index with entries for subjects, languages, authors, and source manuscripts which is helpful in locating examples quickly. This is a very useful book which is a credit both to the editor, Brian Swann, and to the Smithsonian Institute which is also sponsoring a series on studies in Native American literature.

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Ella Deloria was the first Native American writer to produce a major literary opus both in her own language, Lakota Sioux, and in English. Born near the end of the nineteenth century, her life spanned dramatic changes sweeping Native American societies after 1890. Her childhood and adolescence were spent among Sitting Bull's people, the Hunkpapa, where Lakota was the primary language in her home, but she grew up bilingual because her parents were both fluent in English. She attended Oberlin College, University of Chicago and graduated from Columbia University in 1915 where she studied with Franz Boas and was a contemporary of Margaret Mead. In her continuing work as linguist and ethnologist during and after the 1920s she struggled to balance family responsibilities, care of aging parents, inadequate funding and the continued invisibility of Native Americans — even those like herself "who had bought the assimilationist promise of prosperity and prestige in return for education and effort" (p. 3).

Deloria's published works include *Waterlily* (a novel published posthumously in 1988), and *Dakota Texts* (1932, 1978) but she also produced at least ten unpublished manuscripts totalling thousands of narrative pages in Santee, Yankton and Dakota, now deposited with the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia. In *Deer Women and Elk Men*, Julian Rice provides an introduction to her published works. He argues that her contribution is singular: "a unique form of fiction adapted from the oral tradition and set down for the first time as a Lakota language literature, respecting but not deferring to its oral source" (p. 2).

Deloria's method was to listen to narratives in original languages, using no recording devices and taking no notes. Later she would *write* them, both in the language they were told, and in English. Her writings retain the flavour of the oral narration, but she is always clearly the author: "I have honestly tried to recapture these tales as they sing themselves to me, from my memory of the way they sounded as various storytellers told them. They can't be absolute; but they are as true to the speaker as I remember, as I can humanly make them." (p. 11)

Rice is speaking to a scholarly community in his analysis, and he joins the debate about how western scholars can best hope understand a literature with which they have so little familiarity. In the history of approaches to the analysis of oral tradition, certain trends have emerged and Rice challenges particular emphasis: folklore studies that stress the distribution and classification of specific motifs; linguistic analyses that treat texts as musical scores where particles can be sorted and rearranged; discussions that treat oral narrative as "performance" and ignore the transformations that occur when oral texts are put to paper. Instead, Rice aligns himself with scholars who would treat these texts as part of world literature, deserving the same critical eye as other literary works. His enormous respect for Deloria's work, as literature, remains central to his thesis.

The book presents a few puzzles, though, about how Rice actually situates his own analysis. A few years ago, in an edited volume, *Recovering the World*, Rice wrote that in reading Lakota literature, readers must "place themselves within the circle of shared associations" and "not rely complacently on their personal insights or non-Lakota associations" if they wished to understand Lakota narrative.

Each aspect of *lakol wicoh'an* (Lakota ways) should be patiently studied and imaginatively related to the whole tradition within the circumference of the students' experience as their knowledge grows. And that circumference should remain within the hoop of a specific tradition for a sustained period if the subtleties and details of the literature are to appear to readers, of whom many, perhaps even most, do not understand the language of customs of the hunka (ancestors) (Rice 1987:423-424).

Yet in *Deer Women and Elk Men*, Rice spends most of the first half of his book — chapters 2-5 — comparing Lakota narrative with Shakespearean drama. He acknowledges his concern about being seen to validate Lakota literature through comparison with Western "great works" but says he is offering Shake-

spearean contrasts to sharply delineate certain Lakota values that readers might not understand (p. 19) particularly those involving contradictions between sexual attraction and group cohesiveness. The comparison of 15th century drama with narratives heard and written in the 1930s seems strained sometimes, and raises questions about whether the Lakota texts are being analyzed here as “survivals” rather than as the productive contemporary literature that Rice has portrayed for us in his introductory chapter.

Chapters 6-9 are more compatible with his earlier thesis that Lakota literature should first be understood with reference to Lakota language and culture. This seems particularly appropriate when the narratives under study are written by someone like Deloria whose bi-cultural, bilingual upbringing combined with her extensive training in linguistics, folklore and ethnology led her to make detailed notes about subtle points of her translations. Chapter 6 deals with Lakota language texture and the problems of translating Lakota concepts into English. It will be of special interest to speakers and students of Lakota language. Rice tells us early in the book that by 1992 Oglala Lakota College expects 80 percent of its faculty to be Lakota speakers, and that, by extension we can expect Deloria's work in Lakota language to reach an increasingly broader audience. Chapter 7 uses Deloria's English novel, *Waterlily*, as a guide to reading the manuscripts she wrote in Lakota. Chapter 8 presents a thoughtful comparison and critique of Hymes's, Tedlock's and Toelken's methods of transcribing text, comparing their techniques with those of Elaine Jahner whose work impresses him as attending more closely to Lakota narrative conventions.

The strength of this volume lies in its broad introduction to the many facets of Ella Deloria's work. The organization would be more compelling, though, if the four chapters discussing the narratives within their own Lakota tradition preceded those comparing Lakota narratives with Shakespearean drama. Rice tells us that this is the first of three books he is writing about Deloria's work. Several times, he makes intriguing comparisons between Deloria and Isaac Bashevis Singer; both preferred to write in a language other than English but are read more in English translation than in the original. He also posits Deloria as the literary ancestor of such contemporary writers as Silko, Momaday and Welch. Possibly these relationships will be drawn more clearly in forthcoming volumes.

RICE, Julian,

1987 “How the Bird that Speaks Lakota Earned a Name”, in Brian Swann and Arnold Krupat (eds.), *Recovering the Word: Essays on Native American Literature*, Berkeley, University of California Press.

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