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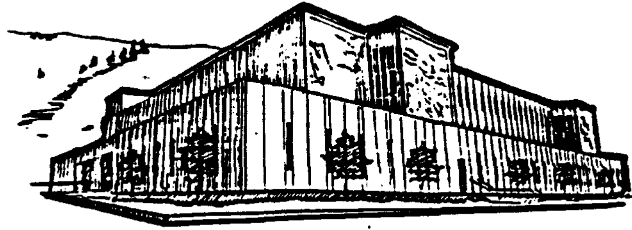

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University of
Montana

ZITKALA-SA:

THE NATIVE VOICE FROM EXILE

by

Dorothea M. Susag

B.A. Montana State University, 1973

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts in English Literature

University of Montana

1993

Approved by:

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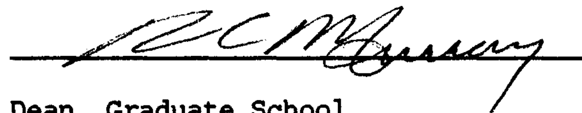

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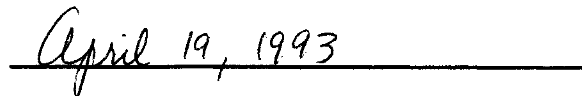

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Zitkala-Sa: The Native Voice From Exile

Director: Lois M. Welch Lois M. Welch

For the last one-hundred years, linguists and anthropologists from the Euro-American tradition have studied the oral and written literatures of Native Americans to determine the cultural foundations of these people, and also to determine their relative acculturation to European ways. Within the last fifty years, literary scholars have analyzed and categorized both traditional and contemporary Native American literature (as translated from the Native languages and as originally written in English) from a Western-European and non-tribal critical perspective to determine its relevant placement within the American literary cannon. Both of these approaches have provided avenues for understanding Native American peoples. However, they have also contributed to the suppression of the indigenous literary voice by denying aspects of its ethnic, historical, and specific tribal consciousness. In light of the cultural, social, and literary barriers for American Indian writers throughout Euro-American history, the published presence of an early twentieth-century woman writer, Zitkala-Sa (Gertrude Simmons Bonnin) 1876-1938, is most significant and deserves appreciation and careful study. To avoid some of the above limitations of the Euro-American imagination, her earliest published essays may be read in their ethnological, historical, and literary contexts: the traditional Lakota tribal culture; the situations of governmental paternalism and forced acculturation and assimilation, both on the Yankton Reservation from 1874-1902 and in government boarding schools such as Carlisle; and the Lakota oral tradition and Western-European literary tradition. Like thousands of other American Indian children, Gertrude Bonnin was a victim of Indian boarding schools. Consequently, she wrote and published from a position of separation from her native home and culture, yet her voice reveals a powerful ethnic consciousness. This ethnological approach to literary interpretation may be useful in determining the way she used elements from the alien Euro-American culture in addition to the power of her heritage to find her own literary voice. With this voice, she transcended her victimization, moved out of isolation and into a tribal community, to tell the story of their near extinction and ultimate survival, and to create a world where ancestral and grieving, oppressed and still-angry voices could be heard.

PREFACE

From over 500 original tribal cultures in North America, with as many as 8 million peoples speaking 500 distinct languages, only 315 tribes and one million Indian people remain,[1] the consequence of three centuries of relentless genocide. From out of those countless numbers, we might expect to have heard the stories of their dying, the stories giving voice to the truth of their suffering. But this has not been the case for at least two reasons: their language systems were primarily oral, and the dominant Euro-American culture suppressed their native voices. From the mid-eighteenth century into the twentieth century, thousands of Indian children from across the continent learned to read and write in English. Still, A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff lists fewer than ten American Indian authors--only one woman--from 1774-1899, with no Plains authors appearing until the early twentieth century.[2] Her list is neither exhaustive nor complete, but it is important to note the minute proportion of published Indian women authors within the native population. Therefore, in light of the cultural, social, and literary barriers for all native writers throughout Euro-American history, the published presence of an early twentieth-century woman writer must be recognized: Zitkala-Sa (Gertrude Simmons Bonnin) (1876-1938).

I first became interested in reading and studying Zitkala-Sa after an introductory course in Native American Studies at the University of Montana. Having just been awarded the Christa McAuliffe Fellowship for 1992-93, I looked forward to working on a project to develop a K-12 curriculum in Native American Literature for Montana schools. At the same

time, I knew I would write a thesis about Indian women for a Master of Arts Degree in English (Literature). Consequently, I looked to study early writers from the Montana Indian community in order to deepen my understanding of their literary foundations. However, the published Indian literary tradition from Montana is primarily male and relatively young, beginning with D'Arcy McNickle's The Surrounded, published in 1937.

My study of Zitkala-Sa has satisfied both concerns. Although she was born on the Yankton Reservation in southeastern South Dakota, her Sioux tradition is very similar to the Yanktonai traditions from Eastern Montana, as well as to other Plains tribes east of the Rocky Mountains. Regarding herself as an essential communicator of the humanity and value of her tribal community, Zitkala-Sa (Gertrude Simmons Bonnin) spent most of her adult life writing and speaking on behalf of the Indian. However, this paper focuses on her earliest published prose: three autobiographical essays, first published in the January, February, and March 1900 issues of The Atlantic Monthly. It has been difficult to know what to call her in this paper. But since she designated Zitkala-Sa as the name under which she published, I will use Zitkala-Sa when speaking about her writing. When referring to her life experience, I will use her "Christian name," Gertrude Simmons Bonnin (1876-1938).

Although this thesis examines the literary power and voice of Zitkala-Sa, I began my research by addressing two questions in order to establish a literary context and critical perspective for this study: "What is Native American Literature" and "How should we study Native American Literature." In response to those questions, I have read numerous

approaches to the study of Native American Literature which vary from those which examine texts independently from their cultural contexts, refusing to regard any external truth which the text might represent, to the approach which centers the text in a cultural and spiritual context and insists it can not be understood apart from that context. It is difficult to take only one critical position when studying any literature. Nevertheless, my concern with identifying the literary, sociological and ethnological systems or contexts for Zitkala-Sa's essays places me in an ethnographic position.

Consequently, I examined the Lakota tribal systems, the Lakota world view, the Lakota definition of power, and the storytelling role of Lakota women before European contact. This information was especially relevant, since Native American feminine power and heritage are closely connected. In the Lakota (Sioux) tradition, women held an important position, and their voices were heard in their storytelling. I also studied the yearly Yankton Reservation Agents' Reports from the years 1874-1902 to determine the situation of Gertrude Simmons' home and tribal community during her youth and during her young adult years. The significant impact of Euro-American influences on the lives of all Native American peoples during this time cannot be denied: governmental paternalism by reservation agents, frequent forced acculturation and assimilation on the reservations and in boarding schools, and the projection of cultural definitions and expectations on the writers by Euro-American ethnographers, historians, and editors.

Finally, I read Zitkala-Sa's essays with this new understanding of the cultural, temporal, linguistic, and aesthetic contexts which may have surrounded her as she lived and wrote. There, revealed in layers of possible interpretations, I discovered the presence of a powerful native literary voice. Writing from past beliefs and through traditional structures, Zitkala-Sa articulated a feminine American Indian experience. But she was also an exile in the strongest sense of the word, a victim of Euro-American forces working through Eastern boarding-schools, a victim of Euro-American forces which would suppress the indigenous feminine voice forever. Nevertheless, I believe Zitkala-Sa overcame those forces to define her own identity, to establish the humanity of her people, and to fulfill the creative role of a Lakota woman as a "carrier of culture."

I must admit that my lack of experience with Indian people and Indian literature has limited my interpretations and translations of these essays. I am non-Indian and have blood-line connections to neither Gertrude Simmons Bonnin nor her people. In no way can I own Zitkala-Sa's story nor can I claim to give her voice. Consequently, I have relied on the voice within these essays and have used her own terms, while I cultivated images from her surrounding cultural, sociological, and historical contexts.

I have struggled with the question of a writer's verbal "power," the source, location, and effectiveness of that power. I have questioned whether the power lies within the story itself, in the voice of the teller, or somewhere outside the text, and I have discovered contradictions between Native American scholars as well as between critics

from the Western-literary tradition. While I have worked with both an Indian and a Western-European perspective, I realize my reference to Zitkala-Sa's voice is an affirmation of this powerful presence in her work. This paper represents the research and reading which brought me to that conclusion. According to Dexter Fisher, a scholar who has studied the lives and writings of both Zitkala-Sa and Mourning Dove, Zitkala-Sa was very proud of her Sioux ancestry:

> Zitkala-Sa sought acceptance in the Anglo world on her own terms, refusing to bend to the prevailing ethnocentrism of her time. In her view, Indian peoples possessed a cultural tradition not merely equal, but superior, to that of Anglo America.[3]

I know we have a tradition of exploitation which must be avoided. Therefore, I have tried to avoid a Pan-Indian stance. I have also depended on sources who want to protect the separateness of American Indian cultures, while they also recognize the fact that contemporary Indian experience and literature is a product of both Euro-American and the indigenous cultures. I have also depended on sources such as Craig Lesley who have expressed the importance of all peoples recognizing the values inherent in American Indian cultures:

> ...respect for land and tribal elders, a sense of history and tradition, awareness of the powers inherent in storytelling, and a closeness to the spiritual world.[4]

I am most grateful to those who have guided me through this effort: Lois M. Welch, my committee chair, whose ready pencil and interminable questions about "just what do you mean" have prohibited anything less than the most serious and self-critical approach to text and to language; Richmond Clow, the historian, whose suggestions that I consider "the

Lakota woman writer, Zitkala-Sa," "the ethnological approach," and finally "the Government Document Section of the Library" have provided the impetus to build a strong historical foundation for this project; and Nancy Cook, whose interest, critical reading, and positive feedback have given me hope that I might one day complete this "tome." To these and other friends and relatives who have shared in the vision here written, to those who have contributed their own voices and translations to my rethinking and rewriting, and to those who believe in the undeniable right of all people to tell their own stories, I dedicate this work.

Notes

1. Kenneth Lincoln, "Native American Literatures," Smoothing the Ground: Essays on Native American Oral Literature, ed. Brian Swann (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983) 3.

2. A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff, "American Indian Authors, 1774-1899," Critical Essays on American Literature, ed. Andrew Wiget (Boston: Hall, 1985) 191-201.

3. Deborah Welch, "American Indian Leader: the Story of Gertrude Bonnin," diss., U of Wyoming, 1985, v.

4. Craig Lesley, Talking Leaves: Contemporary Native American Short Stories, (New York: Dell Publishing, 1991) xvii.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. A Reading of American Indian Literatures....................1

II. The Pre-European Sioux Culture............................24

The Lakota System of Bands and Alliances...........25

The Lakota World View..............................27

Lakota Women.......................................35

Lakota Story.......................................46

III. The Yankton Reservation...................................66

IV. Zitkala-Sa (Gertrude Simmons Bonnin): The Native Voice From Exile........................81

V. "Impressions of an Indian Childhood"....................104

VI. Zitkala-Sa: School Girl and Teacher.....................133

"The School Days of an Indian Girl"...............134

"An Indian Teacher Among Indians".................147

VII. Conclusion - Zitkala-Sa: A Power(ful) Literary Voice....166

VIII. Appendix I - A Classification of Lakota Cosmology.......171

IX. Appendix II - Jessie W. Cook: A "Friend" of the Indian..174

X. Appendix III - Elizabeth Luther Cary: A Critic of Indian Writers........................175

XI. Works Consulted...177

CHAPTER I

A Reading of American Indian Literatures

> Grounded Indian literature is tribal; its fulcrum is a sense of relatedness.
> To Indians tribe means family...
> Tribe means an an earth sense of self...
> Tribe means ancestral history, the remembered presence of grandmothers and grandfathers gone before...
> Tribe means spiritual balance through inherited rituals...
> Tribe means the basics of human community shared, lean to fat...
> And given four hundred sad years of Indian dispossession, tribe often means nonwhite inversions of the American mainstream, a contrary ethnicity and dark pride, even to a people's disadvantage. Kenneth Lincoln[1]

Five-hundred years after Columbus, as a result of America's failure to value and preserve what is sacred, the victors of earth and space are suffering. Here, even in Montana, while listening to cries from tomorrow, silent missile-towers of unfathomable strength wait to speak from below the earth. The Indian's intimate connection with a sacred and forgotten landscape and community, together with a recognition of the sickness in this world and the oft-hidden truth of cultural genocide, have contributed to the growing popularity of Indian literature today. Therefore, to better understand ourselves and our civilization, and to avoid a dangerously ethnocentric cultural isolation, the value of Indian literature for all Americans is unquestionable. On the other hand, I agree with Elizabeth Cook-Lynn (Crow-Creek Sioux) who rejects burdening Indian literature with the task of fixing our world:

> Social policy makers wish to burden (Indian literature) not only with the task of telling whites how they can heal their own psychologically sick society, but also with the responsibility of demonstrating to Indian readers a course of action to prevent further cultural deprivation for themselves: a way to revive themselves.[2]

Cook-Lynn, Professor Emeritus at Eastern Washington University, also believes the sociological study of Indian literature, which often is used to teach non-Indians about Indian culture, results in a subversion of the "intent of the creator of literary experience." Here I disagree. Whether the literature is Indian or non-Indian, we can never know the creator's intent with a written text especially since the creator (not the voice) is absent from the text. I would agree, however, that interpretations change when literatures have been taken out of their own mythological, ethical, and geographical landscapes, and I also believe scholars are obligated to examine and study the various systems which give texts meaning.

For the non-Indian student of American Indian Literature or for any reader from another cultural context, interpreting the aesthetic and tribally-specific experience in both the oral and written literature remains difficult for several reasons. In the first place, some scholars are reluctant to call the oral tradition "literature" since the word is rooted in the Latin "littera" or "letter," whereas the oral tradition is rooted in the extra-verbal aspect of communication. When the oral is translated into a written narrative, the performance system of the narrative--gestures, the tone, the timing, and the immediate audience--is lost. Yet, I believe we might regard the shift from oral to written as a "change of expression" which can still affirm continuity with the past. Therefore, for the purposes of this paper, I will call the oral tradition "literature."

Second, interpretations of oral narratives become problematic when the Native language is translated into English because the native grammar and syntax is necessarily altered. The linguistic system which

gave the original narrative meaning is thereby lost to contemporary English speaking audiences. Consequently, an appreciation of the aesthetic qualities in written works based on that specific oral tradition is even more difficult to achieve. According to Elaine Jahner, a contemporary American Indian Literature scholar:

> It is far easier to identify the thematic structure of a story in Lakota than it is in English because Lakota verbs of movement exhibit some important differences from the English pattern. It is these differences that prompt narrators to say that stories do not translate well into English.[3]

But Jahner commends Ella Deloria (1888-1971) (Yankton/Sioux) for her translations and notes of Lakota stories based on her study of Lakota semantics and her understanding of fine distinctions of meaning which affected the narrative's performance. According to Jahner, Deloria's work has made a specific cultural interpretation possible. Many American Indian writers today are keeping alive the oral genres of their specific tribes by "writing" the extra-verbal experience as they incorporate oral narratives into their own.

Also, interpreting the tribally-specific aesthetic experience is difficult because often the "idea, precept, emotion, attitude, fact, autobiographical incident or sensation" in the literature has taken precedence over the original form and experience of the literary work, according to Cook-Lynn.[4] Again, we have read native literature for its utilitarian value and have used it to define what is outside the text. I would agree that this has frequently occurred when Euro-American ethnographers have translated and/or examined a tribe's oral and written literature to determine tribal history. It has also occurred when Euro-American social scientists have studied the literature in order to analyze

a particular tribal psyche together with its social implications. This approach often denies the voice its literary or aesthetic power.

Finally, it is important to recognize that the system of literary scholarship, rooted in Western-European culture and the Judeo-Christian ethic, has often limited interpretations by neglecting the tribal voice in native literature. According to Paula Gunn Allen:

> The study of non-Western literature poses a problem for Western readers who naturally tend to see alien literature in terms that are familiar to them, however irrelevant those terms may be to the literature under consideration.[5]

I can see how Allen's claim would be especially true when scholars have relied primarily on the formalist method of literary criticism to determine the relative significance, or insignificance, of American Indian literature. This approach tends to ignore the contexual systems which produced the literature, just as it also ignores the reader's various contexts. A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff addresses this issue:

> Because the oral literatures of Native Americans reflect the diversity of their religious beliefs, social structures, customs, languages, and lifestyles, these literatures should be studied within the contexts of both the cultural groups that produced them and the influences on these groups resulting from their interactions with other tribes and with non-Indians.[6]

In spite of the above difficulties with the interpretation of native literature, an increasing number of scholars are communicating their awareness of native literature's aesthetic value and its contribution to our national literary history. They are publishing serious criticism of ancient and contemporary native works, and teachers from across the continent are searching for ways to interpret and to teach our indigenous literature.

Although the oral and written Indian literatures reflect the diversity of tribal cultures, as well as the relative influences of inter-tribal contact and Euro-American culture contact, similarities between ancient and contemporary Indian literatures from across the continent do exist. A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff, in her "Introduction" to American Indian Literatures, defines the similarities in American Indian literatures by citing tribal beliefs as they represent the greater number of tribal cultures. Paula Gunn Allen, in her essay, "The Sacred Hoop: A Contemporary Perspective," and in her introduction to Spider Woman's Granddaughters, cites the same similarities as Ruoff, but she also has delineated some general differences between the native oral and literary tradition and the Western-European literary tradition. Contemporary non-Indians, as well as mixed-bloods who have experienced separation from their traditional cultures, can benefit from an examination of these similarities and differences. Although I realize this critical position based on ethnographic grounds is not the only way to read Indian literature, it can make the literature more accessible to readers from a variety of backgrounds.

First, Gunn-Allen contends that these two traditions hold very different underlying assumptions about the universe. The Western-European draws a definite line between what is spiritual and what is material, with humans in need of redemption because they exist in separation from both the supernatural (divine) and the natural. It is a universe of polarized categories: masculine vs. feminine, Christian vs. Pagan, civilized vs. savage. This Judeo-Christian view "forces English-speaking people into a position of alienation from the world they live in."

The traditional Indian belief, on the other hand, regards all creation as alive and valued where the material and the spiritual are "different expressions of the same reality."[7] All creation exists in a great circle, with each individual having a place on that circle, living in a kinship relationship to everyone and everything. According to Kenneth Lincoln in his Introduction to Native American Renaissance, "the Indian world is believed to be made up of natural exchanges, alive through a reciprocal language of interdependence."[8] And Ruoff suggests "human beings must live in harmony with the physical and spiritual universe, a state of balance vital to an individual and communal sense of wholeness or beauty."[9]

The novel Winter in the Blood by James Welch (Blackfeet/Gros Ventre) exemplifies this concept of interdependence. The following lines are taken from a conversation between the narrator and Yellow Calf, who is blind, old, and living alone--yet not at all alone.

> "But I can't help but feel there's something wrong with you. No man should live alone."
> "Who's alone? The deer come--in the evenings--they come to feed on the other side of the ditch. I can hear them. When they whistle, I whistle back."
> "And do they understand you?" I said this mockingly.
> His eyes were hidden in the darkness.
> "Mostly--I can understand most of them."
> "What do they talk about?"
> "It's difficult. . .About ordinary things, but some of them are hard to understand."
> "But do they talk about the weather?"
> "No, no, not that. They leave that to men.
> He sucked on his lips. "No, they seem to talk mostly about. . ."--he searched the room with a peculiar alertness--"well, about the days gone by. They talk a lot about that. They are not happy."
> "Not happy? But surely to a deer one year is as good as the next. How do you mean?"

> "Things change--things have changed. They are not happy."
>
> "Ah, a matter of seasons! When their bellies are full, they remember when the feed was not so good--and when they are cold, they remember. . ."
>
> "No!" The sharpness of his own voice startled him. "I mean, it goes deeper than that. They are not happy with the way things are. They know what a bad time it is. They can tell by the moon when the world is cockeyed." [10]

In Yellow Calf's world, the animals suffer and know--probably sooner than humans--when harmony within the cosmos is broken.

Along with differing world views, Gunn-Allen suggests the meaning and function of symbol between the Indian and Western-European traditions is also different. Symbol to the Western-European is "something that means MORE than what it is: an object, person, situation, or action that in addition to its literal meaning suggests other meanings as well."[11] Generally, in Euro-American culture, symbol stands for something greater than itself as a cross stands for the Crucifixion or a flag stands for The United States of America.

By contrast, symbol for the Indian is a "statement of perceived reality," the reality which embodies the Indian world view.

> We Indians live in a world of symbols and images where the spiritual and the commonplace are one. To us symbols are part of nature, part of ourselves, and we need no more than a hint to give us the meaning.[12]

In Lame Deer's Cheyenne universe, the physical aspect of the symbol is as real and important as the reality it represents, the meaning being tied to a specific tribal context and often a particular ceremony. This definition of symbol is exemplified in the writing of N. Scott Momaday in <u>The Way to Rainy Mountain</u>. One evening he returns to his grandmother's house, in mourning, and sits on the steps.

> Once I looked at the moon and caught sight of a strange thing. A cricket had perched upon the handrail, only a few inches away from me. My line of vision was such that the creature filled the moon like a fossil. It had gone there, I thought, to live and die, for there, of all places, was its small definition made whole and eternal. A warm wind rose up and purled like the longing within me.[13]

In this passage, the cricket and the moon are symbols, according to Gunn Allen's definition, capturing "that reality where thought and feeling are one, where objective and subjective are one, where speaker and listener are one, where sound and sense are one." [14] The blending of those images into a complete vision contrasts with the "longing within" him as he feels separation and yearns for wholeness.

Terms most often connected with symbol by American Indians represent a third difference between the two traditions: the idea and experience of the Sacred and of Power. To the Western-European and according to Random House Dictionary, the Sacred is "holy," "venerable, consecrated, or sacrosanct." Power is most often defined in economic, historical and political terms; it is the force by which one imposes his/her will upon others. Gunn Allen describes the Sacred to the Indian as "something that [the sacred thing] is filled with, an intangible but very real power or force, for good or bad."[15] Julian Rice, a contemporary Lakota scholar, refers to Mircea Eliade who defined a holy place as: "an inexhaustible source of power and sacredness," where a man "simply by entering" can "share in the power" and "hold communion with the sacredness."[16] Landscape is sacred, and story is held in the landscape which contains power to reactivate a story within our memory. Beck and Walters, in their text The Sacred: Ways of Knowledge Sources of Life, define sacred as having two sides:

> the personal, ecstatic side that individuals find hard to describe, and the part of the sacred that is shared and defined year after year through oral histories, ritual, and other ceremonies and customs.[17]

In James Welch's historical novel, Fools Crow, the Sun Dance Ceremony begins with the opening of the sacred medicine bundle.

> The first object he held up was the sacred elkskin dress. He sang of the origin of the garment while the women put the dress on Heavy Shield Woman. Then they draped an elkskin robe over her shoulders. One by one, he removed the sacred objects: the medicine bonnet of weasel skins, feather plumes and a small skin doll stuffed with tobacco seeds and human hair; the sacred digging stick that So-at-sa-ki, Feather Woman, had used to dig turnips when she was married to Morning Star.[18]

The Blackfeet universe is structured and maintained by these powerful sacred symbols. Ultimately, power is circulated through human beings so that life in this world might continue.

Along with the belief that physical objects can hold sacred power is the equally important belief that word and thought also hold power. Kenneth Lincoln suggests that a belief in the human voice invoking power "underlies some five-hundred Native American literatures."[19] Dexter Fisher believes a two-fold power exists in "the word." It is the "vehicle for the imagination," and it is the "means of clarifying relationships between individuals and their landscapes, communities, visions."[20] I believe this implies the "word" can "clarify" relationships of enmity as well as those of community. N. Scott Momaday further clarifies the meaning of sacred and power. Story is sacred, and story holds power because it is created out of thought and word. "The power of thought and word enables native people to achieve harmony with the physical and spiritual universe." Used in this way, power is a benevolent force. But this power can also be used for evil, according to

Ruoff, "because of their power and because words spoken can turn back on the speaker. "For good or evil, thought and word should be used with great care," she said.[21] Nevertheless, we can conclude that power is connected to words, and the one who lacks power, the one who stands isolated and alone, most frequently remains wordless and voiceless also. For this reason, Cook-Lynn continues to fight for the literary voice of native people.

According to Gunn-Allen, a fourth difference between the Western literary tradition and the American Indian tradition are the purposes of literature produced within those cultures. Although I would deny anyone's ability to determine authorial intention other than the author herself, it is useful to look at Gunn-Allen's explanation since the following can function as possible authorial purposes in either the Western or native literary tradition. She sees the primary purpose of Western-European literature as self-expression. Franchot Ballinger calls this the "European esthetic," which is "centripetal," where "language is intended and accepted as the manifestation of a unique individual."[22] Indian oral literature, on the other hand, is "centrifugal," seeking to "integrate the various orders of consciousness,"[23] to bring the individual into harmony and balance with the entire community of all Creation and to maintain the status quo: "peace, prosperity, good health, and stability."[24] Mando Sevillano in his article, "Interpreting Native American Literature: An Archetypal Approach," disagrees with Gunn Allen's exclusive position:

> It is difficult to imagine any important piece of literature of any culture as being pure self-expression. A sampling of any great literary figure--Yeats, Eliot, Shakespeare, Momaday, Silko, James Welch--shows that they all shared their understanding of reality in an attempt to bring the isolated individual--the author as well as those who partake of his work--into harmony and balance with their community.[25]

The integrative purpose of literature may be more visible in the oral tradition than the contemporary written tradition which, by its very nature, reaches beyond tribal boundaries to the dominant Euro-American population. On the other hand, although an entire contemporary work may not carry the intention to bring the individual into balance and harmony with all Creation, characters within the stories often do. In her third novel Tracks, Louise Erdrich closes her last chapter with the patriarchal Nanapush, an Ojibwa grandfather, remembering his fight with the bureaucrats in order to "draw (his daughter) home."

> That's when I began to see what we were becoming, and the years have borne me out: a tribe of single-space documents, directives, policy. A tribe of pressed trees. A tribe of chicken-scratch that can be scattered by a wind, diminished to ashes by one struck match.
>
> For I did stand for tribal chairman, as you know, defeating Pukwan in that last year. To become a bureaucrat myself was the only way that I could wade through the letters, the reports, the only place where I could find a ledge to kneel on, to reach through the loophole and draw you home.
>
> Against all the gossip, the pursed lips, the laughter, I produced papers from the church records to prove I was your father, the one who had the right to say where you went to school and that you should come home. [26]

In response to the pervasive disintegration of tribal communities today, many contemporary Indian writers are telling stories which pull in the edges to say "you should come home."

Directly linked to the purposes of literature is the fifth difference between the traditions: the classifications of genres. Generally speaking, Western-Europeans divide literature into prose, poetry and drama. Although traditions from tribes may differ, Gunn Allen identifies three major divisions for traditional oral Indian literature: Ceremonial, Prose Cycles, and Popular. All three divisions are related to ritualistic purpose rather than style or form. Through the sacred power of song and

narrative, tribes work to "order their spiritual and physical world." Ruoff calls ceremonial literature, "ritual drama, the current term most commonly used by scholars to denote ceremonial complexes," although she admits tribes usually use the words "chants, chantways, ceremonies, or rituals." Because of its sacred nature, this literature is "incomprehensible to the common people when used in their ritual context." Ruoff cites William K. Powers, author of Sacred Language, where he states that:

> the Sioux have two types of sacred language: the generic wakan iye (sacred language) and the hanbloglaka (vision talk). Wakan iye is the form of language used between medicine men, 'the language of philosophical commentary on the nature of religious things.' Hanbloglaka is used in sacred discourse between individual medicine men and their spirit helpers.[27]

As all tribal societies participate in their traditional rituals or ceremonies, the spiritual and material and all things living are integrated for "peace, prosperity, good health, and stability."

Generally speaking, all tribes combine prose and popular literature into one category, and Ruoff recognizes the presence of many narratives among different tribes. But "the details, the categorization, the significance of a specific version, and its performance depend on the cultural context of the tribe in which that version is told."[28] The prose cycles teach as well as entertain and therefore serve to integrate Indian children, especially, into the "beliefs and history of the tribe."[29] Today, Native American writers frequently utilize the prose and popular cycles even as they write in the Western literary forms.

One such cycle in Native American literature is the trickster-transformer cycle; with mischief on his mind, the trickster is the overreacher who most often gets his "just" reward. Mando Sevillano again

disagrees with Gunn Allen. In order to make Native American literature more accessible to the non-Indian, Sevillano uses an archetypal mode of analysis which demonstrates the trickster-transformer is a universal motif found in much literature from around the world.[30] Just the same, in American popular literature, the trickster figure is most often connected with Indian culture. Within various tribes, the figure assumes different forms, and A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff delineates:

> Although the trickster-transformer figure is usually male, in some cultures, such as the Hopi, it is occasionally female. The culture hero-trickster-transformer takes many forms, most of which are animals: Coyote in the Southwest and Plateau, Raven in the Northwest and Arctic, Hare in the Great Lakes and Southeast, Old Man among the Blackfeet of the Northern Plains, Spider among the Sioux of the Dakotas, and Wolverine and Jay in Canada.[31]

Gunn Allen defines a sixth difference between Western-European and traditional oral Indian literature: the way each culture views text. The literary and written text, until deconstruction, has always been considered the basis and real existence of Western-European literature, whereas the "real" text of American Indian oral literature exists in its performance, as I indicated earlier. Traditional Indian storytellers adapt each story to the situation and specific needs of the audience without considering this a violation of the text. The audience responds by participating in the story and by recognizing personal experiences which are clarified and understood through the story. The oral tradition of a tribe absorbs the real historical experiences of its people, making individual knowledge one with communal knowledge. Brian Swann and Arnold Krupat, in their introduction to I Tell You Now, discuss this difference between the two literary traditions.

> Our own notion is that "good" style can be judged only rhetorically and functionally, in relation to the context in which it appears and the effects it seeks to achieve. The Euro-American tradition has been a written tradition used to dealing with textual objects. The Native American tradition, however, has been oral, presenting not objects but acts, not pages but performances. The question therefore--and this question must be faced directly by any readers unused to having it posed--is not whether language appears "good" according to some conventional model of textbook goodness but whether it WORKS to good effect, whether it communicates to us, moves us, makes us see.[32]

Early Indian writers, as well as the more contemporary, have incorporated performance literature in their novels, using it "to bring the individual into harmony and balance." Within these novels, the story's significance or real meaning is directly related to the situation from which it arises. In Cogewea, Mourning Dove tells stories through the grandmother, Stepteema. In Ceremony by Leslie Marmon Silko, stories from the "long time ago" appear in the midst of action. Although the authority of the novel is questioned, Seven Arrows by Hyemeyohsts Storm serves as an example of the way a writer uses elders to tell stories which help the protagonists better understand their world and their place in that world.

The definition of "hero" is a seventh difference between the two cultures. Although I believe much literature written today includes female heros, Gunn-Allen notes that for the Western-European, the ideal hero is self-reliant and male, resolving conflicts in order to achieve communal and individual goals. The ideal Indian hero, on the other hand, represents values necessary for the survival of the community. The hero can be masculine or feminine, frequently learning the negative effects of individuality and moving toward the common tribal understanding of ritual tradition which the people within the tribe share. He/she moves into community not away from it.[33]

It is useful to look at examples of both traditions in order to further clarify this difference. William Faulkner's "Barn Burning" is a good example of the Western tradition. From the beginning of the story, we see Sarty suffer under his father's physical and mental abuse. Forced to participate in the barn burnings and then forced to lie before judges, he struggles within himself between his loyalty to his father and his personal integrity. Near the end, he breaks from his mother's hold and frees himself to warn Major De Spain that his barn will burn.

> "Yes!" the boy cried. "Barn!"
> "Catch him!" the white man shouted.
> But it was too late this time too. The Negro grasped his shirt, but the entire sleeve, rotten with washing, carried away, and he was out that door too and in the drive again, and had actually never ceased to run even while he was screaming into the white man's face.

Having experienced Faulkner's "heart in conflict with itself," the boy faces that conflict and makes the "right" decision, the decision requiring the most courage, the decision requiring the most compassion for himself. Although he moves into the woods toward the voices of birds, his betrayal separates him from his family.

> He was a little stiff, but walking would cure that too as it would the cold, and soon there would be the sun. He went on down the hill, toward the dark woods within which the liquid silver voices of the birds called unceasing--the rapid and urgent beating of the urgent and quiring heart of the late spring night. He did not look back.[34]

By contrast, the hero/heroine in Indian literature moves toward community rather than away. At the end of Fools Crow by James Welch, the hero finds himself surrounded by and completed with images from his community: "Red Paint's hand, the rhythm of the drum, his vision of the other world, Feather Woman, and drops of water on the bare earth that countless feet had trampled smooth over the winter." As an adult now, he

is responsible, "burdened with the knowledge of his people, their lives and the lives of their children."[35] Yellow Raft in Blue Water by Michael Dorris closes with another image of tribal community--the braid.

> "What are you doing?" Father Hurlburt asked.
> As a man with cut hair, he did not identify the rhythm of three strands, the whispers of coming and going, of twisting and tying and blending, of catching and of letting go, of braiding.[36]

At the end of Louise Erdrich's Love Medicine, the very last image is "home:"

> "The morning was clear. A good road led on. So there was nothing to do but cross the water, and bring her home."[37]

In Debra Earling's short story, "Perma Red," Louise, with peroxided hair turned red, returns home to the reservation because "Annie's been sick." She is reluctant, filled with a "dark kind of sadness" that goes beyond the death of her mother. But two final images in the story affirm her tribal identity. As she sits in the truck watching the burial crowd, she twists "the mirror round so she could look at her face. In the sunlight she could see that the red color of her hair did not match her dark skin. She looked for something to cover her head." And her Grandma's chanting in Salish "a meandering song that made Louise very sad," sings "to a part of Louise that was lonesome."[38]

Finally, Gunn Allen contrasts the Western-European tradition of unity in linear time, place, and action within a single piece of literature with the traditional Indian idea of unity. Ruoff cites Ron D. Theisz who analyzed Lakota oral narratives in Buckskin Tokens.

> The plots of Lakota stories are compressed and episodic, settings are simple, and the style is terse. The stories have one-dimensional characters, who rarely express thought or emotion. The stories also sometimes contain inconsistencies of time, logic, and detail, which are simply accepted by the

> listeners as artistic conventions that serve to further the action.[39]

This literature then is cyclical and episodic, varying in points of view. However, contemporary Western fiction as well as contemporary Indian fiction also exemplifies these patterns. Love Medicine by Erdrich reads like a collection of gossip with words and stories from several narrative voices. In Ceremony by Leslie Silko, scenes move from the time of World War II, to before the war and after the war, then into the realm of the extra-ordinary with ancient stories of Tayo's people, the Laguna Pueblo.

There is another very important characteristic of Indian writing which appears in even the earliest written works. Although it is not necessarily separate or different from the Western writing tradition, it does align itself with the protest literature of other marginal cultures. This characteristic is the theme of dispossession and displacement, of loss, of cultural genocide, together with the indomitable struggle to survive. We can't read Indian writers without acknowledging their very personal witness of cultural, physical, and territorial disintegration. According to Paula Gunn Allen:

> The impact of genocide in the minds of American Indian poets and writers cannot be exaggerated. It is an all-pervasive feature of the consciousness of every American Indian.[40]

According to Fisher, this protest writing differs from the oral tradition which purposes to "edify and preserve the group," rather than to "defend the group against outside criticism."[41] But I believe the power to recreate community does exist within this writing as it works to recover and protect disappearing cultural values and beliefs. The fact that many of these writers' works can still represent a cultural affinity with any

of the traditional characteristics listed above speaks to their irrepressible desire to survive. According to Joseph Bruchac (Abenaki):

> Native American Poets have concerned themselves with themes of survival: survival of old ways,survival of individual Indian nations, personal survival, survival of Indian people as a whole, the survival of the natural world, and of this planet.[42]

Although my analysis of the differences between Western-European literature and traditional American Indian literature has utilized the work of both Paula Gunn Allen and A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff, Mando Sevillano has built a valid case against Gunn Allen's complete dependence on the "ethnic approach," especially since the most significant influence on native literature in the last one-hundred years has been the culture-carrying English language system. But many Indian writers, from those who first told their stories in English to those of mixed blood writing today, have succeeded in incorporating their past tribal systems and experiences into their writing in the present. Leslie Silko (Laguna/Pueblo) similarily defines her literary perspective: "It's my point of view, coming from a certain kind of background and place,"[43]coming from a particular ethnic consciousness and experience. For this reason, no study of Indian literature can disregard neither the Euro-American nor the native ethnological systems which produced that literature.

Elizabeth Cook-Lynn's concern that Native literature has been subverted when taken out of specific tribal contexts is valid if we are to limit our study of native literatures as representations of "universal archetypes." But her entire argument about subversion is weakened when we look at two purposes of traditional prose narratives: to teach and to entertain. Yet, she criticizes non-Indians for using native literature to demonstrate to

"Indian readers a course of action to prevent further cultural deprivation for themselves: a way to revive themselves." Nevertheless, it seems to me she places herself in a position of contradiction, both promoting and rejecting a purely ethnic approach.

Although there are, no doubt, other characteristics of Indian and/or Western literature which might be considered in this paper, these literary systems addressed here have proven useful in my study of the traditional as well as the contemporary Dakotah voice in Zitkala-Sa's essays. Euro-American culture has influenced her writing. Only by keeping in mind the above cultural differences and/or similarities can we recognize the degree to which she is more or less writing from a traditional and/or Euro-American point of view.

It is difficult to take only one critical position when studying any literature. Nevertheless, my concern with identifying the literary, sociological, and ethnological systems or contexts for Zitkala-Sa's essays places me in an ethnographic position. Consequently, I hope I have avoided some of the problems Cook-Lynn has addressed. My analysis has been limited by the data I have been able to accumulate and find relevant. It also has been limited by my own particular experience with the literature as I define and explore several levels of interpretation. While I have worked with both an Indian and a Western-European perspective, I realize my reference to Zitkala-Sa's voice is an affirmation of this presence in her work.

I know we have a tradition of exploitation which must be avoided. Therefore, I have tried to avoid a Pan-Indian stance. I have also depended on sources who want to protect the separateness of American

Indian cultures, while they also recognize the fact that contemporary Indian experience and literature is a product of both Euro-American and the indigenous cultures. I have also depended on sources such as Craig Lesley who have expressed the importance of all peoples recognizing the values inherent in American Indian cultures:

> ...respect for land and tribal elders, a sense of history and tradition, awareness of the powers inherent in storytelling, and a closeness to the spiritual world. [44]

The American Indian literary tradition today is painfully rooted in a culturally specific history of genocide. But it is also rooted in a growing bilingual tradition, in a tribal aesthetic, and in the communal sensibilities shared through generations of stories and tellers. Although the actual impact of the first Indian writing upon the tradition today would be impossible to measure, Zitkala-Sa's initial efforts in moving a community's oral literary experience into the written literary expression deserves recognition and serious study. From out of her Yankton community, Zitkala-Sa wrote to "preserve history and culture for posterity...to perpetuate tradition in the face of cultural disintegration,"[45] A generation later, Ella Deloria would continue that tradition: "all life, all culture of a people, is of one piece. No element of it exists in a vacuum."[46] In these essays, Zitkala-Sa articulates the feminine and extra-ordinary power of Dakotah tradition as it circulates from thousands before, through the mother, the child, and the writer, to perpetuate life, tradition and tribal community in the face of forces which would destroy that power and voice.

Notes

1. Kenneth Lincoln, "Sending A Voice," Native American Renaissance, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983) 8.

2. Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, "American Indian Literatures in Servitude," The Indian Historian 10 (1977): 6.

3. Elaine Jahner, "Cognitive Style in Oral Literature," Language and Style: An International Journal 16 Winter (1983): 43.

4. Cook Lynn, "American Indian Literatures in Servitude," 4-5.

5. Paula Gunn Allen, "The Sacred Hoop: A Contemporary Perspective," Studies in American Indian Literature, Critical Essays and Course Designs, ed. Paula Gunn-Allen, (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1983), 3.

6. A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff, American Indian Literatures, (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1990), 5.

7. Allen, "The Sacred Hoop," 8.

8. Lincoln, "Sending A Voice," 2.

9. Ruoff, American Indian Literatures, 6.

10. James Welch, Winter in the Blood (New York: Penguin Books, 1974) 67-68.

11. Lawrence Perrine, Structure, Sound, and Sense, 5th ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988) 1416.

12. Lame Deer in Ruoff, American Indian Literatures, 7.

13. N. Scott Momaday, The Way to Rainy Mountain (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1969) 12.

14. Allen, "The Sacred Hoop," 17.

15. Allen 8.

16. Julian Rice, "Beyond the Race Track: Paha Wakan Lakota," North Dakota Quarterly, 53.2 (1985): 2.

17. Peggy V. Beck and Anna L. Walters, *The Sacred: Ways of Knowledge Sources of Life* (Tsaile, AZ: Navajo Community College Press, 1977) 6.

18. James Welch, *Fools Crow,* (New York: Viking Penguin Inc., 1987) 111.

19. Kenneth Lincoln, in "Sending a Voice," believes "this power remains pan-Indian, despite relative differences over time and degrees of acculturation to modern, non-Indian ways." 2.

20. Fisher, Dexter, "Historical Perspectives for American Indian Women," in *The Third Woman: Minority Women Writers of the United States*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), 5.

21. A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff, *American Indian Literatures*, 7.

22. Franchot Ballinger, "A Matter of Emphasis: Teaching the 'Literature' in Native American Literature Courses," in *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, 8:22 (1984) 5.

23. Allen, "The Sacred Hoop," 10.

24. Allen 18.

25. Mando Sevillano, "Interpreting Native American Literature: An Archetypal Approach," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 10:1 (1986) 3.

26. Louise Erdrich, *Tracks* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1988) 225.

27. Ruoff, *American Indian Literatures*, 19.

28. Ruoff 40.

29. Ruoff 39.

30. Sevillano 10-11.

31. Ruoff 47.

32. Brian Swann and Arnold Krupat, *I Tell You Now: Autobiographical Essays by Native American Writers*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987) xiii.

33. Paula Gunn Allen, ed. *Spider Woman's Granddaughters*, (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1990) 6.

34. William Faulkner, "Barn Burning," *The Faulkner Reader*, 514-516.

35. Welch, *Fools Crow,* 390.

36. Michael Dorris, Yellow Raft in Blue Water, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1987) 343.

37. Louise Erdrich, Love Medicine, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1984) 272.

38. Debra Earling, "Perma Red," in The Last Best Place: A Montana Anthology, ed. William Kittredge and Annick Smith (Helena, MT: The Montana Historical Press, 1988) 1019-1025.

39. Ruoff, American Indian Literatures, 41.

40. Paula Gunn Allen, "Answering the Deer," American Indian Culture and Research Journal 6.3 (1982): 39.

41. Alice Poindexter Fisher, "The Transportation of Tradition: A Study of Zitkala Sa and Mourning Dove, Two Transitional American Indian Writers," diss., City University of New York, 1979, 160.

42. Joseph Bruchac, Survival This Way: Interviews with American Indian Poets, (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, DATE) xiii.

43. Leslie Marmon Silko, from "Stories and their Tellers - a conversation with Leslie Marmon Silko," as cited by Dexter Fisher in "American Indian Women Writers" in The Third Woman: Minority Women Writers of the United States, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1980) 18.

44. Craig Lesley, Talking Leaves: Contemporary Native American Short Stories, (New York: Dell Publishing, 1991) xvii.

45. Dexter Fisher, "The Transformation of Tradition: A Study of Zitkala-Sa and Mourning Dove, Two Transitional American Indian Writers," Native American Literature, ed. Andrew Wiget (Boston: Twayne Publishing, 1985) 202.

46. Ella Deloria, Speaking of Indians, ed. Agnes Picotte and Paul N. Pavich, (Vermillion: Dakota Press, 1979), 41.

CHAPTER II

The Pre-European Sioux Culture

> It is the responsibility of a poet like me to 'consecrate' history and event, survival and joy and sorrow, the significance of ancestors and the unborn.
>
> Elizabeth Cook-Lynn[1]

In the early twentieth century, Zitkala-Sa (Gertrude Simmons Bonnin) wrote and published stories from the landscape of her inter-cultural and inter-racial experience. In spite of Western political and religious forces which would lay waste her Yankton Sioux culture, she bore personal witness to the "survival and joy and sorrow" of her tribal heritage. While schooled in the Euro-American tradition, both on and off the reservation, her writing reveals a strong dependence on traditional Sioux imagery, landscape, and story. A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff insists that "each body of tribal literature must be studied within the cultural context of the group that produced it."[2]

Although the cultural context for Zitkala-Sa is mixed, we can better understand the subsequent changes which Euro-American influences produced, by comparing language use and subject matter, when we define the Yankton Sioux pre-contact experience. Such a definition is difficult to construct because the Sioux system of organization and language groups from pre-reservation times was complex and yet flexible as whole villages migrated in the wakes of thousands of grazing buffalo. Nevertheless, as we examine her writing, we should keep in mind a cultural landscape. Therefore, this chapter will look at the pre-reservation system of Sioux bands and alliances and the different languages within that system, the cultural

world view of the Sioux, the traditional role of women, and the tradition of story within that culture.

The Lakota System of Bands and Alliances

Gertrude Simmons was born in 1876 on the Yankton Indian Reservation in what was then Dakota Territory. Throughout her life, she claimed to be "a Dakota woman" and refused definition as a "mixed-blood."[3] Although biographers and critics of Gertrude Simmons Bonnin indicate this specific tribal connection, the question remains--just what is a Dakotah or a Lakota or a Sioux? For practical purposes, the entire nation has been and still is called Sioux by many writers, historians, and ethnologists. Although Elizabeth Grobsmith doesn't offer a date, the Chippewas referred to the whole people as "Lesser Adders" (snake) or Nadoweisiw-eg in order to distinguish them from a more feared enemy, the Iroquois, the "True Adders." Unable to pronounce the Chippewa word, the French shortened it to "Sioux," the name by which this Plains people has been known for over two centuries.[4] Yet the name "Lakota" has also represented the larger nation as a whole, as well as a particular alliance and dialect. This double meaning of Lakota contributes to the confusion over just who these Plains people were.

Within this greater Sioux or Lakota nation are three related dialects: Lakota--"a dialect of the 'Dakota Sioux' language within the Siouan linguistic family," Nakota--spoken by the northern or Yankton Sioux, and Dakota--"the language of eastern or Santee Sioux," These dialects of the Sioux represent three major alliances as well, but "all the Sioux tribes constituted a political unit called the Oceti Sakowin or 'Seven Council

Fires,'"[5] which traditionally met every summer for the Sun Dance Ceremony. The largest division was the Tetons or Tetonwan (Prairie Dwellers) located west from the Missouri River. Within this Teton division were seven bands, all speaking the Lakota Dialect: Oglala (now living on the Pine Ridge Reservation), Sicangu or Brule (living on the Rosebud, Lower Brule, and Crow Creek Reservations), Hunkpapa, Mnikowoju, Sihasapa, Oohnunpa, and Itazipco, (these last four are living on the Rosebud, Lower Brule, and Crow Creek, Cheyenne River and Standing Rock Reservations). The Dakotah dialect was spoken by four divisions of the "Seven Council Fires" which were included in the Dakota Alliance: the Wahpeton, the Mdewakanton, the Wahpekute, and the Sisseton. The two other divisions of the "Seven Council Fires" were the Yanktan (End Dwellers because of their location at the end of the camp circle) and Yanktonais (Little End Dwellers), both forming the Nakota Alliance and speaking the Nakota Dialect.[6] Although several sources agree with this designation, Raymond DeMaille, in his introduction to Sioux Indian Religion, questions it for two important reasons: there is "no historical evidence that these people ever used an initial n in their name" and "throughout recorded history, they have called themselves Dakotah.[7] Other evidence also supports DeMaille's conclusion. They are referred to as "Dakotas" in the Yankton Reservation Agency reports, and Gertrude Simmons Bonnin called herself "Dakotah." Speakers of each dialect could be understood by speakers of the other dialects, and yet the complex traditional organization of these tribes demonstrates their heterogeneous nature.

The Yankton Band/Dakotah dialect represents a part of the historical, cultural, and linguistic heritage of Gertrude Simmons Bonnin. Perhaps she

was familiar with more than one dialect, since both Dakota and Nakota words appear in her essays and stories: Iktomi, a Dakotah word, without the n, and Wiyaka-Napbina, a Nakota word with the n. In spite of government efforts to eradicate the native languages across the continent, Gertrude Simmons Bonnin (Zitkala-Sa) helped to maintain the cultural integrity of her native heritage.

Lakota World View

For the purposes of this paper, it is also useful to examine the cultural world view of the Yankton Sioux in their pre-European context. In The Sacred: Ways of Knowledge Sources of Life, Peggy V. Beck and Anna L. Walters cite Simon Ortiz as he explains the term "world view:"

> The notion "world view" denotes a distinctive vision of reality which not only interprets and orders the places and events in the experience of a people, but lends form, direction, and continuity to life as well. World View provides people with a distinctive set of values, an identity, a feeling of rootedness, of belonging to a time and a place, and a felt sense of continuity with a tradition which transcends the experience of a single lifetime, a tradition which may be said to transcend even time.[8]

I must admit that world views varied between the traditional political divisions of the Sioux Nation and between individuals within that tradition. But for the purposes of this paper, I will refer to Raymond DeMaille, James R. Walker, Marla Powers, Elizabeth Grobsmith, Beck and Walters, and Beatrice Medicine who indicate the traditional beliefs and practices which the entire Sioux people, or Lakota in the broadest sense, held in common.[9] Although the world view of a people can never be equated with that of the individual, it is important to note that specific culturally and symbolically constituted ideas of the nature of self and

the universe, and their relative importance for a people, do influence the way individuals within that culture view the world.

The traditional Lakota world view--their understanding of their origin, and the power surrounding their existence--begins with an event and a place. According to Raymond DeMaille, humankind, along with the buffalo which provided food for the people, were created in the womb of Mother Earth:

> Humankind existed not outside nature but as part of it. Human beings stood in awe and fear of the universe, venerated it, and dared to manipulate it to the best of their limited capability. The incomprehensibility of the universe, in which humankind, through ritual, could share, was called WAKAN.[10]

To non-Indians especially, the complexity and incomprehensibility of this concept, of this power, is evident when we look at the many different attempts at definition. According to Beck and Walters, a Teton Sioux has said, "This earth is under the protection of something (wakan) which at times becomes visible to the eye. Its representations appear everywhere." The supreme personification of this power is Wakan Tanka, often referred to as "Grandfather."[11] Citing sources who spoke to James R. Walker, DeMaille defines Wakan Tanka as "the great incomprehensibility, who created the universe, but at the same time THEY comprised the universe. They are many, but they are all the same as one."[12]

Elizabeth Cook-Lynn's argument that Westerners cannot understand the "incomprehensible," and are doomed to "subvert its intent," is thus weakened, since "incomprehensibility" also applies to the Indian's understanding of this extra-ordinary power. Therefore, if we are to talk about the origin, meaning, and experience of story in this cultural context, it would seem that Westerners and Indians alike must accept the

concept of wakan, mystery, this extra-ordinary force which moves throughout the universe.

Grobsmith defines wakan as the spirit controlling the "four major animistic forces or superior gods: Inyan, the Rock; Maka, the Earth; Skan, the Sky, and Wi, the Sun." These forces are connected to four associate deities: Wakinyan (Winged) in connection with Inyan; Whope (Beautiful One) in connection with Maka; Tate (Wind) in connection with Skan; and Hanwi (Moon) in connection with Sun.[13] These powers in their cosmology, arranged in groups of four or seven, are seen in visible, concrete objects, and their roles and the way they behave are explained in the stories of the people.[14] They saw all things dependent on each other--deities and powers were present in all things sacred.[15]

In the Lakota world view, this interdependent relationship was expressed in terms of kinship, especially within the tiyospaye (ti - dwelling; ospaye - company), a community of about ten to twenty related families who could move around easily. In this community, each child had many mothers and fathers, since all related males and females of the parents' generation were also "mothers" and "fathers" to the children. They also had several grandfathers and grandmothers, since all males and females of the grandparents' generation were also "grandmothers" and "grandfathers." It is important to note that this kinship was not defined in biological terms but in terms of behavior. For example, children by abducted white women were considered full-blooded Sioux. Bea Medicine, a niece of Ella Deloria, believes the same communal relationship exists today, and that each Lakota is still responsible to both self and tiyospaye as well. "Whether we are biological or sociological parents, we are embedded in the

tiyospaye (the basis of the extended family), and this relationship factor is extremely important to us; through it we are all related."[16]

To maintain successful community, Dakotas were to practice self-sacrifice, risk taking, respect for elders, and responsibility towards the entire community. According to Ella Deloria (Yankton Sioux):

> The ultimate aim of Dakota life, stripped of accessories, was quite simple: One must obey kinship rules; one must be a good relative. No Dakota who has participated in that life will dispute that. In the last analysis every other consideration was secondary--property, personal ambition, glory, good times, life itself. Without that aim and the constant struggle to attain it, the people would no longer be Dakotas in truth. They would no longer even be human. To be a good Dakota, then, was to be humanized, civilized. And to be civilized was to keep the rules imposed by kinships for achieving civility, good manners, and a sense of responsibility toward every individual dealt with. Thus only was it possible to live communally with success; that is to say, with a minimum of friction and a maximum of good will.[17]

The giveaway was one way the Lakota, Nakota, and Dakota people perpetuated this interdependent community. "All property in excess of actual wants was distributed through the giveaway, and it is impossible to live the true Dakota life and accumulate possessions."[18] The giveaway demonstrated an individual's preference for relatives over objects, and so prestige within the community was gained through the giving away of possessions. Jeannette Mirsky, in her essay "The Dakota," published in a collection of essays edited by Margaret Mead, cites several occasions for public giveaways where property is given not to but in the name of the person honored: on the recovery of a person who had been ill, on the birth or death of a child, when children marry, when a husband or wife dies, at the end of "ghost keeping," and during ceremonies as a gesture of gratitude for blessings and honors, or any time an individual wished to "publicly express love for another."[19]

The importance of the Lakota kinship concept also extends to other-than-human persons. "We know that we are related and are one with all things of the heavens and the earth, and we know that all the things that move are a people as we."[20] In 1918, a Standing Rock Reservation shaman, Brave Buffalo, told of a dream he'd had which indicated this dependency as well as a human being's responsibility within it.

> It seemed as though the flowers were staring at me, and I wanted to ask them, "Who made you?" I looked at the moss-covered stones; some of them seemed to have the features of a man, but they could not answer me. Then I had a dream, and in my dream, one of these small round stones appeared to me and told me that the maker of all was Wakan'tanka, and that in order to honor him I must honor his works in nature.[21]

Brave Buffalo defines his responsibility toward that reality--he must "honor his works." Herein lies the importance of personal beliefs, honor, or commitment to ceremonial practices, the religious actions of the people. For the traditional Lakota, the power, wakan, can be received and transferred through the ritualistic practice of Ceremony which "serves to hold the society together, create harmony, restore balance, ensure prosperity and unity, and establish right relations within the social and natural world."[22] This right relationship will remain only as long as the people maintain their practice of ceremony.

According to DeMaille, the Lakotas believed this intimate relationship between the Lakota people and the sacred had not always existed. Long ago the buffalo people had warred against mankind. So the Buffalo People sent The White Buffalo Calf Woman, one of the Wakan Tanka, "to establish a relationship between them and humankind."[23]

It is useful at this point to relate the basic story of the White Buffalo Calf Woman since she embodies the traditional Lakota world view:

Buffalo Calf Woman demonstrates a specific set of values, she gives identity to the people, she makes connections between the extra-ordinary and the ordinary, and she makes connections between the people of all generations. In each individual's personal and public experience with her through ceremony, they know they belong:

> There is a famine in camp and two hunters are sent out to scout for buffalo. They see an object in the distance, and as it comes closer they see that it is a woman carrying an object. One of the hunters wishes to have sex with her;the other advises him not to because she is mysterious. Not heeding the advice, the first hunter approaches her and he is immediately covered by a mist. When the mist rises he has been transformed into a pile of bones through which snakes are crawling. The woman then advises the second hunter to return to camp to tell the chief to erect a council lodge; she will come later with something very important for them. Later she arrives with the sacred pipe and teaches the Lakota the Seven Sacred Rites. She then leaves, but before disappearing over the hill, she turns into a white buffalo calf.[24]

Always resembling a strikingly beautiful woman with hair smelling of sweetgrass when it blows in the wind, the White Buffalo Calf Woman appears as one both "sacred and sexual, and immature as a calf and mature as a cow." This is the basic story, although specific details, such as the name, are as variable as storytellers in varying tribes and generations.[25]

The values represented in this story deserve explanation, since most sources would agree with Powers that "the major symbol of Lakota belief, ritual, thought, and knowledge for the first time and for all times is the Sacred Pipe."[26] First, this story represents the choice between good and evil, between behavior which is acceptable and that which is unacceptable, which is found in many Lakota stories. Other stories may involve the Double Face Woman, Black-Tail or White-Tail Deer, who visit an individual who is required to make a voluntary choice between good and evil. Second, even though the choice of behaviors is voluntary, punishment for the

unacceptable choice is very severe and may be death. Third, she is a virgin and therefore pure; that is why only female virgins were permitted to handle sacred objects and to touch the Sun Dance pole. Fourth, the story demonstrates the belief that improper sexual behavior will cause the disappearance of the buffalo. White Buffalo Calf Woman is sacred because she is associated with the white buffalo, a sacred animal among the Lakota. Fifth, she is the source of <u>wakan</u> to all the people, but especially to women through her gift of the Sacred Pipe and the Seven Sacred Rituals. The White Buffalo Ceremony is conducted in honor of a young woman's change, at the time of the first mensus, to "the stage of life marked by reproduction."[27] Sixth, the <u>wakan</u> she gives to women is most evident in the power to give birth and to nurture (through her connection with the buffalo which is the source of survival for Lakota people). Seventh, she has been regarded as similar to the Virgin Mary by Lakotas who have made the transition from traditional religion to Catholic Christianity, although the differing world views would make a direct analogy impossible.

These rituals which the White Buffalo Calf Woman gave the people are a means by which the Lakota can honor and maintain their kinship with the ordinary and the extra-ordinary world. According to Grobsmith, two rituals continue to be part of the Lakota religious life: The Sweat Lodge, which is a spiritual purification or Vision Quest, a time of fasting where a young man receives supernatural power and an awareness of individual purpose in life; and the Sun Dance, an action of group solidarity and self-sacrifice in gratitude for the gift of the buffalo. The Buffalo Ceremony and The Ball Throwing Ceremony were performed at the onset of

menstruation or puberty; another ceremony called The Hunka involved adoption of a child or the special honoring of a child which creates a bond sometimes stronger than kinship. The last ceremony involves the "Keeping of the Soul," naqi-wanaqi; this ceremony reminds the family of death and protects the movement of the ghost to its origins.[28] Rigid attention to and practice of these ceremonies was critical, since "the ritual would fail to produce the desired end and might actually result in doing harm" if it weren't performed correctly.[29]

It is likely this was the pre-European world view of Zitkala-Sa's tribal ancestors. William K. Powers insists, however, that there is no such thing as "cultural purity." Rather, "cosmology is relative;" as differences occur between the theory and practice of culture, "cultural reinvention" occurs. This no doubt was the situation with the Lakota people. As a consequence of increasing Euro-American encroachment, they were forced to limit their ceremonial practices. Still Powers would say their "differential" cultural continuity remained and was passed through generations who were born on the reservations. Power's observation is important because it can help the student of culture avoid conclusions which represent a polarized view where one side is right and the other wrong. Zitkala-Sa is not exclusively Indian or White; she is a product of the contact between two very different cultures. Powers also believes "cultural exaggeration" occurs when the culture of a people is experiencing its greatest threat. Consequently, writers such as Zitkala-Sa would "underscore their distinctiveness" in order to avoid absorbtion into the dominant culture.[30] It is important to note that contemporary Lakotas still adhere to traditional values. In her essay, "Indian Women

and Traditional Religion," Beatrice Medicine expresses the urgency for perpetuating four of the most important Lakota values:

> We need to think about the ways in which we were taught the Lakota values that are so much a part of the religion. Sharing and Generosity are the first things that come to mind, the first of four great Lakota virtues; the others are Fortitude Wisdom and Bravery. These virtues must be realized in our lives as individual men and women; we have to make them REAL.[31]

These same values, together with tribal wisdom, and the means by which they avoided evil--distinguishing them from other Native American cultures and the Euro-American culture--were traditionally taught and practiced by both men and women through story, song, and ceremony. In order to maintain their traditional culture, sacred traditions and persons knowledgeable in those traditions were responsible for teaching morals and social behavior.

Lakota Women

One relevant aspect of Lakota social behavior was the practice of pre-European gender roles as taught to generation after generation by grandparents and parents. Although my study focuses on the literary voice of Zitkala-Sa, it is important to remember she was a woman, as well as Dakotah. Therefore, it is useful examine the common Lakota feminine tradition which Nakotas and Dakotas shared. Grace Black Elk, an Oglala Lakota elder writes:

> The Lakota have no word for 'sexist'
> The White man does.
> The Lakota does not put his name to his child.
> White men do.
> For the Lakota, property is the possession of the woman. The generations are the responsibility of the woman. Power

is thus in the hands of
women......
Lakota women
are the strength of the people.[32]

Seen through the eyes of Western-European men, the role of Indian woman as homemaker, gardener, and teacher, was a subservient role. Especially with regard to the more masculine tribal societies such as the Sioux, this stereotypical view of the American Indian woman's inferior status within the tribe has dominated ethnographical and historical studies since the initial contact of Europeans with Indians. According to Rebecca Tsosie, stereotypical "passive, self-effacing, dependent Indian women" in nineteenth-century literature were able to attain nobility "by virtue of their marriages to brave white men."[33] By contrast, Gretchen Bataille cites Bea Medicine in support of her belief "that Indian women do not need liberation, that they have always been liberated within their tribal structures."[34] This was definitely true of Gertrude Simmons Bonnin. Consequently, from the moment "paleface" missionaries first "captured" her, she fiercely fought against the Euro-American system which would destroy her Indian identity.

Since James R. Walker addressed the issue of traditional women's roles in more detail than most scholars of his time, I have used Walker's Lakota Society, unless otherwise noted.[35] Some of Walker's conclusions pose interesting contrasts to his own data as well as to a contemporary study by Marla Powers who used him as a source. Nevertheless, his work is particularly relevant because he was studying the Oglala Sioux at the same time Zitkala-Sa began to write about her experiences as a Yankton Sioux.

According to Walker and other sources as well, the roles of women and men with regard to labor were clearly defined, and both sexes were revered

and respected for their skills. Before the hunt, the women made all preparations; they moved camp, overhauled wardrobes, tipis, travois, harnesses, and they packed the horses or carried the equipment on their backs.[36] After the men had killed the buffalo, the women skinned and cut up the carcasses and dried and tanned skins which belonged to them (the women). Within the camp, they cut and trimmed poles, put up and took down tipis, prepared and served food, carried water, and made moccasins and clothing for husbands and children.

To a degree a woman was considered her husband's property in the Lakota society, but she herself owned property. She owned the skins of buffalo her husband had killed, and she owned items she had made from those skins if they had been made for a member of the family. According to Weist, this is the way she had control over the products of her labor.[37] She owned the tipi and everything belonging to her family with the exception of her husband's clothing, implements and sacred equipment. She also owned the children until they reached puberty when they became independent or when the boys' voices changed and they became the property of their fathers.[38]

According to Walker, and contrary to the stereotypical Euro-American view, a Lakota woman also held many rights with respect to herself, her property, and her relationships. She had the right to accept or reject a suitor. Although her husband had the right to "throw her away," once she was gone, he could no longer control her. She had the right to leave a man who had taken or "bought" her, and she could hide or become the woman of someone more powerful. She had the right to appeal to the akicita (marshals) of the camp if her husband put her away, and she could depend

on her friends and family to support her, although the final judgement of the akicita was considered law. Should she banish her husband, by force or with the aid of relatives, he had no such opportunity to appeal. If she divorced a man for infidelity, she could "beat him with a club until he bled." She also had the right to take another husband if her husband consented. Even an abducted woman could assume the rights of a full-blood Oglala Sioux once she had borne a child.

The Lakota woman was obligated to act according to tradition and could be disciplined by ridicule or physical force if she failed in that obligation. In the tipi, she sat at the left of her husband. According to Jeannette Mirsky, "a child need never expect discipline from the mother "since the mother would never scold, however older brothers and sisters could.[39] When guests came into the tipi, she was obligated to serve them all food from whatever she had. At feasts, women vied with each other over who prepared the best food, and a woman who took away food from the feast was mocked for her unwillingness to share all she had. Although her friends would defend her from an unjustified accusation, once judged guilty of adultery, her husband could throw or give her away, cut off her nose, or kill her. If she were guilty, she would lose all rights to her property and to her children except for the babies.[40] A Santee woman told Ella Deloria the characteristics of a "good woman:"

> She must be faithful to her husband, devoted to her children, industrious and skilled in womanly arts, genuinely hospitable and generous, and a strict follower of kinship etiquette. She should think much but say little, and she should stay at home and occupy herself with her own business. Chastity was of paramount importance. She must not be guilty of any "deeds" (oh'an), meaning indiscretions. "Without chastity all the other fine qualities are not enough to earn the name 'good woman.'"[41]

According to Walker, the Lakota woman's influence within the family and the community was extensive. She would sing the songs which warriors had composed in honor of themselves, and she would sing buffalo songs when men returned to camp. Her husband would consult her over family matters, since there she held supreme authority. "The mother's authority was greater than that of the father."[42] Her daughters learned their domestic skills through her teaching. Although Walker indicates women never took part in meetings of chiefs, he does admit old women would occasionally make speeches there. The influence of the women in the political sphere was more noticeable through their husbands who would listen to their opinions in private, and Walker suggests they were "peripherally connected" with religion, medicine, leadership and government.[43] However, Walker also says that a woman could inherit the office of chief. She would then preside at all assemblies and consider the common welfare of the camp, if there were no other male offspring with "sufficient ability."[44] Another source indicates the influence women held over men at war. They could prevent their men from going on expeditions by withholding their food source.[45]

There were societies for "distinction and sociability," made up of "loyal, industrious, hospitable women and virgins."[46] Walker also indicates Lakota women participated in ceremonies and rituals. At puberty, the Buffalo Ceremony would be conducted in their honor, or they could be received by adoption into a family through the Hunka Ceremony. Women would mix colors of glass beads in order to neutralize the power of beads which had come from the white man. DeMaille regards this as strength since they could "manipulate the power of color."[47] They would

burn fires to ward off the Two Faced Woman and or they would paint a lizard and call on the Winged God.[48] Witches were considered to have occult power to be used for good or to "vent their spleen."[49] In this way, female power was bound and directed for either good or evil.

Although this information from Walker indicates the power of Lakota women many times dominated or was equal to the power of men, he contradicts his own data and implies, as indicated below, that women were inferior to men in Lakota society.

> Their traditions held the female inferior to the male, and that she should serve him. For this reason the women did the drudgery pertaining to the camp.[50] The only duties of the Dakota soldiers are to march and fight, and when not engaged in either of these they are not together as an organized body so that they are not obligated to perform the ordinary duties of camp life. They considered such affairs as beneath their dignity, leaving it to the women to perform the manual labor, or to the akicita, marshals, who were appointed to enforce compliance with regulations and execute the orders of the chiefs, headmen, and the council.[51]

This negative bias--"traditions held the female inferior...women did the drudgery...such affairs [were] beneath their dignity"--supports the view of contemporary anthropologists and writers who agree with Katherine M. Weist regarding the role of Lakota women as defined by white male anthropologists and ethnologists. She begins her paper "Beasts of Burden and Menial Slaves: Nineteenth Century Observations of Northern Plains Indian Women" with eighteenth and nineteenth century definitions of "savagery:"

> For them, a major component of what they defined as savage was the position of Indian women, who were frequently referred to as "beasts of burden," "slaves," and "sexually lax." This is not to say that all observers used these characterizations or that all tribes were evaluated as equally "savage," but the overriding emphasis was an explicitly negative estimation of the position of Indian women vis-a-vis that of men.[52]

Weist further asserts that this stereotype of Indian women persists because of the biases of white male ethnographers, such as Walker, and other students of Indian culture who have continued to view the Indian woman as the "quiet and passive drudge" of Indian society. Weist sees support for this opinion within incongruities and contradictions in the reporting of women's status and in later studies which fail to support these nineteenth century views. Weist also cites Raymond DeMaille--the editor of Walker's Lakota Society--who suggested the "Teton view of femininity and masculinity was very complex and cannot be easily reduced to simplistic generalizations."[53]

Although Walker's studies appear to have much credibility with other contemporary anthropologists, his work is useful as a contrast with Beatrice Medicine, with Ella Deloria, and with Marla Powers, a woman who interviewed Oglala women for her 1977 dissertation, Oglala Women in Myth, Ritual, and Reality. Seventy years after Walker, she studied the same people. Her views on the role of women in the pre-European Oglala or more general Lakota society reveal women as more strong and the role definitions much more flexible than Walker's. Although it is possible the effect of westernization on the Oglala may have caused this difference, I believe it is unlikely since the strongly patriarchal, Euro-American opinion of Indian women has continued to be negative. In apparent agreement with Weist, Powers suggests that the roles of Indian women were complementary rather than subservient to men.

There is an overwhelming agreement that the roles of men and women in traditional Oglala society were complementary exemplified in the Lakota concept of okicicupi 'sharing', which was a philosophy that underscored

not only relation- ships between men <u>or</u> women, but between men <u>and</u> women.[54]

> Outsiders seeing women keep to themselves have frequently expressed a snap judgment that they were regarded as inferior to the noble male. The simple fact is that woman had her own place and man his; they were not the same and neither inferior or superior.[55]

When researchers reported the inferior position of women, it is likely they were observing women demonstrating "proper" behavior toward relatives.

Evidence from Bea Medicine, Patricia Albers, Mary Jane Schneider, Alan Klein, and Raymond DeMallie in their presentations at a 1977 symposium entitled "The Role and Status of Women in Plains Indian Cultures," also indicates the role of the traditional Lakota woman was neither static nor weak.

> The division of labor between men and women was not only not exclusive, but the kinds of duties which were considered appropriate for men and women varied from group to group.[56]

According to Bea Medicine in her essay "'Warrior Women' Sex Role Alternatives for Plains Indian Women," there is evidence that women warriors--<u>winoxtca,</u> a soldier society of women who had achieved war honors and would then police other women in camp--were common amongst the eastern Dakota, although no evidence exists regarding the Teton. Women also demonstrated power when they expected husbands to avenge the death of a brother or encouraged husbands to take other wives to help with the work. Bea Medicine sees a balance between sexes in Rites of Passage ceremonies: <u>Hanbleceya</u>--vision seeking for boys, and Ball Throwing Ceremony for girls. These rituals "imprinted upon the minds of each sex the duties and responsibilities both to self and to <u>tiyospaye</u>."[57] Medicine's conclusion

suggests that they could demonstrate their influence through "options [other than following masculine roles and behaviors] which included assertiveness and independence."[58]

These same scholars regard as contradictory evidence which views an Indian woman's position as "passive slave" or "drudge" as errant stereotyping, and they recognize as powerful the traditional role of Plains Women. The predominance of male ethnographers interviewing only males would tend to reveal this bias. Beatrice Medicine cites contemporary Lakota women themselves when she summarizes her definition of the role of Indian women:

> 'We are the carriers of culture.' This belief may provide Indian women a mandate to transmit cultural viability, engendering a sense of identity with a unique and satisfying cultural group. It is this that gives Lakota women the strength to operate in both the native and the non-native life spheres.[59]

With respect to this idea of women as "carriers of culture," we need to examine the term power as it relates to Lakota women and their traditional role.

According to Lame Deer, an Oglala, "Power is "force, for good or bad...and having Power means being able to use this extra force without being harmed by it."[60] As we have seen, the Lakota recognized the existence of this kind of power throughout the universe. Mary Jane Schneider, in an essay entitled "Women's Work: An Examination of Women's Roles in Plains Indian Arts and Crafts," cites Elizabeth Colson for another definition of power which can extend our understanding for the Lakota in particular. It is a power which is "remunerative" rather than "coercive," where individuals who have access to resources offer them to others in exchange for something else:

> Implicitly, at least, they defined power as a relationship between people with different resources. They found sources of power in control over such specific resources as land, money, strategic position in a communication network, and sometimes in the ability to convince others they had supernatural support.[61]

Marla Powers also suggests that the "traditional female role is rooted firmly in the cosmological past."[62] In other words, the traditional female role is intimately and spiritually connected to wakan or power as defined by the Lakota world view. In her essay, "Mistress, Mother, Visionary Spirit: The Lakota Culture Heroine," Powers says, "The multivariate, sometimes contradictory, attributes of the White Buffalo Calf Woman underscore the high value that Lakota males and females place on the role of women at each stage of their life."[63]

White Buffalo Calf Woman exhibited wakan by using that power "without being harmed by it," since she was not harmed by the passion of the young man. She also exhibited power since she possessed a "resource," the Sacred Pipe, which she gave to the Lakota people when she introduced them to their religious traditions.[64] White Buffalo Calf Woman is also wakan as she is related to Inktomi who taught the Buffalo People how to hunt, cook, make clothing, and build shelters. Powers sees this as expressing "the complementarity between the sexes even at the mythological level." Therefore, both males and females participated in constructing the universe, just as they both share responsibilities in this world.[65] It may be concluded that Lakota women possess wakan when connected to the White Buffalo Calf woman through the Buffalo Ceremony. She is the source of their ceremonial, or past, power. This is the message the White Buffalo Calf Woman brings to her sisters:

> You have a hard life to live in this world, yet without you this life would not be what it is. Wakantanka intends that you shall bear much sorrow--comfort others in time of sorrow. By your hands the family moves. You have been given the knowledge of making clothing and of feeding the family. Wakantanka is with you in your sorrows and joins you in your griefs. He has given you the great gift of kindness toward every living creature on earth. You he has chosen to have a feeling for the dead who are gone. He knows that you remember the dead longer than do the men. He knows that you love your children dearly.[66]

In the traditional Lakota sense, women alone held the power to give birth and to nurture. Men feared the strength of their feminine power so much that they refrained from sexual intercourse the night before a hunt or war or ceremony.[67] Bea Medicine also asserts the strength of wakan in women. "In the past a Lakota woman removed herself from the tiyospaye (at times of menstruation) because her wakan, her creative force, was so powerful that it interfered with other sacred activities."[68] In contemporary Ceremony and Ritual, "the role of the Sacred Pipe Woman is very prestigious, and many Lakota women, both young and old, vie for the honor."[69] Medicine insists that participants recognize the way the "Sacred Pipe Woman who participates in the ceremony symbolizes White Buffalo Woman, whom we recognize as the culture bearer."[70] Dexter Fisher recognizes the change in woman's role which has occurred as a consequence of reduced tribal power accompanied by white attitudes toward women. But she insists that "Indian women have continued in their traditional role as teachers."[71]

Bea Medicine speaks of contemporary evidence of Lakota cultural persistence, insisting on the importance of the traditional spiritual reality as evidenced in contemporary ritual observance:

> There is a heightened awareness of the efficacious attributes of WAKAN...But this transformation of WAKAN has to go beyond

> mere ritual. It should, in a sense, be enacted in the way we socialize our children and the way we present ourselves not only to other Lakota people but to the dominant society. Surely we must look at the contours of spirituality in our Indian communities.[72]

In their essays, Alan Klein, Beatrice Medicine and Patricia Albers admit the power of Plains Indian women has changed since European contact, due to changes in the Native American Community as well as the intrusion of Western influences.[73] The impact of stereotyping and acculturative influences on the voices of native and mixed-blood women cannot be denied. Nevertheless, the writing of Zitkala-Sa may still evince a powerful voice even in the traditional Lakota sense of the word. According to Paula Gunn-Allen (Laguna Pueblo/Sioux):

> We are here to testify that our traditions are valuable to us, and that we continue to resist obliteration either of our cultures or our personhood.[74]

Zitkala-Sa demonstrated the truth of this statement for herself through the medium of language and, more specifically, story.

Lakota Story

> I know the feeling of something tugging at the core of the mind, something unutterable uttered into existence. It is language that brings us into being in order to know life.
> Simon Ortiz [75]

In silence, around past winter fires, power moved through eyelash and smiles, through heads bent and turned. In sound, power moved through image and word, through direction and thunder. More than medium, and more than symbol, language for the American Indian has been power, power for "being" and power for "knowing life." Zitkala-Sa viewed language and culture and "personhood" and power as inextricably bound. Deborah Welch writes:

> Again and again, [Zitkala-Sa] reiterated her belief that the old people, those who clung to the traditional ways, had much of value to teach to young people. Only in the lessons of the previous generations could the Sioux identity be passed on to the young.[76]

In spite of its importance to Indian people, the oral tradition of American Indian culture has been interpreted from the dominant Euro-American's cultural bias. Calling it "primitive folklore," historians, ethnologists, and government agents sent to enforce assimilation and acculturation have relegated the oral tradition to a condition of artifact, interesting and useful for historical study, but no longer necessary for modern Indian life. Others have gone to the other extreme and have sought to use the spirit and stories to mend our troubled world. Again, Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, rejects such interpretations and uses of tribal literature. Instead, she insists that the oral literary traditions must be accepted as meaningful in the experience itself, and "as something more significant than simply a transitory process toward that academic condition called LITERACY and the path to getting information."[77] Rather than asking "what does it mean?"--especially in the Western-European literary tradition--Cook-Lynn instead suggests asking, "How is it to be experienced?"[78] I believe literary criticism of all Native American works, both traditional and contemporary, must begin with a look at how that work has been--and still is--experienced within the context of tribal and personal, past and contemporary, spiritual and secular history.[79]

From a non-Indian point of view, this sense of the "experience" would seem impossible since no one but the individual can know the truth of the personal. It is for this reason, that we must look at Indian oral traditions as Indians themselves would interpret the stories' realities.

N. Scott Momaday has written about the relationship between language and story and experience.

> Stories are made of words and of such implications as the storyteller places upon words. The story lies at the center of language, and language is composed of words...when not rooted in our common experience, a story would have no meaning for us, and strictly speaking it would not be a story. [80]

Metaphors for oral tradition or story appear as writers have defined their understanding of story. For Zitkala-Sa, "native spirit" was the essence of her stories.[81] For Luther Standing Bear (Lakota), story was "the answer to questions asked by children...the libraries of our people," and for Paula Gunn Allen (Laguna/Pueblo, Sioux) story is:

> the sacred power of utterance...[illuminating] the ritual tradition of the storyteller's people, [making] pertinent points to some listener who is about to make a mistake, and [holding] the listeners' attention so that they can experience a sense of belonging to a sturdy and strong tradition.[82]

The Lakota oral tradition, in particular, has been regarded as a product of the tribal imagination, spiritual power, and historical context. As the stories teach and entertain, they establish and maintain communal continuity--kinship with all persons who share that tradition, world view, and culture.[83]

Since oral tradition means "told-to-people"[84] stories, we can examine the historical, and still contemporary, roles of both the storyteller and the listener. Created in the presence of community, the stories were frequently told before selective groups. The Lakota storytellers may have been holy men or women, either male or female, but Momaday's definition of Black Elk as storyteller is useful, since it also generically defines the ideal Lakota storyteller as one who created-and still creates--the listener:

> [he is] magician, artist and creator. And above all, he is a holy man. His is a sacred business...he sets words in procession...the storyteller creates his listener. In effect he says to his listener, 'In my story I determine you; for a moment--the duration of the story--your reason for being is the story itself; for the sake of the story, you are. In my story I create a state of being in which you are immediately involved.[85]

The listener, then, is created within the fellowship of an age-old Lakota tradition. According to Black Elk, the storyteller is not the European "I," is neither self nor egocentric. Instead, the storyteller relates the vision of a people and their tradition, and the storyteller relates the source of his/her authority.[86] Ella Deloria's Dakota Texts, a collection of sixty-four stories in their original language which have been freely translated into English by Deloria, provides examples of this tradition. Frequently, "they say" will end a declarative sentence, implying that the "teller subordinates his potential egotism to serve the continuity of the tradition."[87] Although Zitkala-Sa's audience was primarily Euro-American, she expressed her desire to make connections between her traditional tribal community and her audience through storytelling. According to Deborah Welch, "she had found purpose as a spokesperson for her race." [88] Zitkala-Sa never pretended to speak for herself alone; she represented the voices of her traditional heritage as well as the voices of her contemporaries who struggled against extinction and/or assimilation. The Lakota believe storytelling is vitally important because it "perpetuates a consciousness without which subsequent generations will be unable to realize their humanity."[89]

Literary and ethnological scholars today acknowledge that Lakota women frequently performed the storytelling function in the same way as men, and I found no indication that they were valued any less than the men. In

fact, their role as "culture bearers" went beyond the formal storytelling situation. Through the language of silence and motion, story and word, and by the power of the White Buffalo Calf Woman, they taught children the values of kinship and appropriate tribal values regarding relatives, both human and non-human; they taught appropriate behavior with respect to sex roles; they taught children their personal responsibility to the group, and they taught the meaning and practice of ritual. Marla Powers illustrates the way grandmothers, through story, would instruct children in Lakota tradition. They might say:

> "Don't gaze at the moon," because once a women with a child on her back gazed at the moon and became senseless.
>
> "Don't point at the rainbow," because your fingernail will grow into a ball.
>
> "Don't refuse food," or the spirits might become angry and won't give any more.[90]

Powers credits the women for remembering the "things of value to the Lakota," and Dexter Fisher regarded the grandmother as "supreme storyteller" in Plains Cultures.[91]

Although the storyteller "creates the listener," she still must adjust the subject matter, tone, and style of the story to meet the specific needs of the audience. On the other hand, the listeners must relinquish personal control for the moment, suspend disbelief, and subject themselves to the power of the storyteller. As the old stories are told, the listeners may use them to interpret their own present condition. The listeners are expected to participate actively in the process, both verbally and nonverbally, in order that a new story might be created within their imaginations as well.

The dynamic rather than static nature of the storytelling situation must be recognized; Lakotas today as well as those from the 19th Century testify to the many variations of stories. Franz Boas once asked Ella Deloria to translate the stories which had been gathered by James R. Walker in an effort to establish the accuracy of Walker's work. She was unable to speak with any of Walker's original sources since they were dead, but Fire Thunder, a friend of one of Walker's narrators, signed a statement saying:

> the tales were never related in that manner...We had tales treating of Ikto, Iya, the Owl Maker, the cold wizard, the old woman or witch, coyote, and these were personified humans, and besides them there was nothing.[92]

In her letters to Boas, Deloria explained her attempts to locate other sources who would recognize more similarities between Walker's stories and the stories as they knew them thirty years later:

> ...It is true enough that the characters which function in those tales of Walker's do flash in and out, throughout Dakota speech, but the plot of the tales, the style of them, and the invention of various happenings all sound like the work of a clever Dakota story teller. Of course, the tales are further colored by the white man's mode of expression in the English; but the stuff of which they are built is definitely Dakota, it is agreed. One man said, "You'll never find those stories in just that shape, if you should ask every single person on the Pine Ridge...If they were ever repeated in my time, I most certainly would have heard them, for listening to OHUNKAKAN was my hobby from childhood."...But it does not seem probable, or possible that, if they were ever told about in the tribe, currently as our IKTOMI tales even yet, they should soon disappear so completely from the repertoires of all tribal storytellers save one! That is still my opinion.[93]

In spite of her translating Dakota stories from the native language in order to preserve them for a people, Deloria knew the essence or truth of any story lay within its historical and personal context--within the dynamic "experience" of the story. Consequently, the attempt to locate a

most accurate version is fruitless. This would support William Powers' idea that there is no such thing as "cultural purity" and that culture is "reinvented" rather than lost. Contemporary scholars as well as traditional Lakotas proficient in storytelling would agree that the revelation of meaning is dynamic and dependent on context. According to Beck and Walters:

> Sometimes the story you hear is like a code which, the more you listen to it over the years, the more it reveals. This coding of knowledge in stories is like not asking 'why,' because you have to listen more closely. Then you also have more of a chance to suddenly discover meanings, concepts, and ideas by yourself.[94]

The stories can have many dimensions with characters symbolizing something other that what they appear to be. Beck and Walters also suggest the stories can cross from entertainment to the sacred when they are told during ceremonies.

Although the substance of Indian oral tradition changes, scholars have suggested classification systems for stories based on familiar English classifications as well as traditional Lakota classifications. The following is Ella Deloria's Lakota classification system:

OHUNKAKAN	**WOYAKAPI**
Had some fictional elements	Stories about actual happenings which occurred in the historical memory of the tribe
1.) Situated in mythical remote past when the world was in a state of formation	1.) May happen to someone aided by supernatural powers
2.) More recent but still amazing events.	2.) Simple accounts of events that took place in the local band and are told at times to recall the past or to entertain one who has not heard them.
	3.) Winter Counts, pictures, They would name and keep track of years on the basis of outstanding

> occurrences, keeping the community's ordered continuity through time based not on years but events.[95]

Most of the tales in Lakota Myth are OHUNKAKAN, according to Jahner, as are the stories in Deloria's Dakota Texts and Zitkala-Sa's American Indian Legends. Jahner has used the English terms "tale," "narrative," and "myth," which refers to narratives with cosmological content (although Lakotas would still define them as past actuality), and they rely on the stories to explain reality or to reveal truth. The classifications of stories do help us better understand how they may have been experienced by pre-European Lakotas. Such classifications also direct our own experience as we read and listen to stories today.

In her Preface to Old Indian Legends, Zitkala-Sa claims that from out of the stories, "the personified elements and other spirits played in a vast world..."[96] According to Ella Deloria in her introduction to Dakota Texts, one of the most popular characters in Lakota stories is Iktomi, the trickster, "part of the common literary stock of the people." He is the "poser," who is out to get the best of a situation. With no "conception of sincerity," he pretends to have sincere motives while he works the situation to his own benefit.[97] In the first story in Old Indian Legends, Zitkala-Sa describes Iktomi for her eastern literary audience: he is "spider fairy...who dresses like a real Dakota brave...a little imp...wily fellow" without much common sense who prefers the cunning rather than honest solution to a problem. He is the "snare weaver...not wholly a fanciful creature."[98] In other words, he behaves the way human beings actually behave, demonstrating what is humanly possible, and he participates in the stories with other human beings. Yet, in the Lakota

cosmology, he is original power also. According to Deloria, when someone would say, "He is playing Iktomi," the people would understand that the individual was posing as a very agreeable fellow in order to get what he wanted.[99]

While the tales entertain, they also teach various lessons to the people, encouraging them to be wary since the anthropomorphic Iktomi can appear in any disguise. Andrew Wiget in Native American Literature suggests that "In his flauntings and his failures, Trickster offers us through his inversion of norms a reflex image of what is probable, preferred, or absolute, and a direct image of what is possible."[100] The Trickster tales are dangerous, subversive, because they cause us to question the accepted social order, and they cause us to question our revered institutions and their power.

Recognizing the relationship of story to context or landscape is important when we look at the oral tradition as communicated by Zitkala-Sa in the English literary mode. She demonstrates what has been experienced throughout the ages, "mystically and communally--with individual experiences fitting within that overarching pattern,"[101] but we will see how Zitkala-Sa, especially, tells an Iktomi story from a boarding-school landscape. We will also see how her stories do more than present the "humanity of the Indian" to a white literary audience; they play the trickster and serve to question their audience's hallowed ideological foundations.

The importance of the native language for traditional meaning and experience in story is obvious. Elizabeth Grobsmith believes native language is the "tie that binds modern Indians to their culture of a

century ago."[102] According to Elaine Jahner, in her introduction to Walker's Lakota Myth, "The medium of presentation carries its own, often subliminal message. Switching from an oral to a written medium automatically and necessarily involved a loss of meaning, and all attempts to compensate for that loss can only be provisional."[103] Standing Bear said that "countless leaves in countless books have robbed a people of both history and memory."[104] More seems to be lost, for Standing Bear, than a certain essence and verbal meaning since memory includes silence and motion and words. "Facial expressions, hand movements, and pauses were lost on the printed page."[105] The nonverbal aspects of communication, Simon Ortiz' "unspoken language of motion," may be lost on the printed page.

The question remains, then: if the essence of a culture existed in the native language, and if that language is inaccessible to most contemporary Indians, could Zitkala-Sa possibly serve as Bea Medicine's "carrier of culture?" Dexter Fisher believes she does, along with other Indian women writers:

> Their literature is testimony to their awareness that culture is dynamic and that change is not a negation of tradition. Nostalgia and a sense of loss haunt their landscapes, yet the predominant note is hopeful because their literature is an extension of an oral tradition based on the power of the word that has managed to survive and to maintain the American Indian community.[106]

The dynamic--and sometimes overlooked--aspect of their native culture may help us understand how they could continue to "keep their history on the leaves of memory."[107]

The editors of three contemporary Indian works--Talking Leaves, edited by Craig Lesley, American Indian Women Telling Their Lives, edited by

Gretchen M. Bataille and Kathleen Mullen Sands, and Spider Woman's Granddaughters, edited by Paula Gunn Allen--all assert the method and strength of many Indian women writers today. These writers draw from the "canonical works," of their own Indian nations and work their contemporary landscape and story through that specific tradition. Allen calls it writing "out of tribal traditions, and into them."[108] According to Bataille, they write with an "emphasis on event, attention to the sacredness of language, concern with landscape, affirmation of cultural values and tribal solidarity."[109] In his introduction, Craig Lesley also writes of contemporary native writers' particular use of tradition:

> ...respect for the land and tribal elders, a sense of history and tradition, awareness of the powers inherent in storytelling, and a closeness to the spiritual world...they have survived in part because they have never completely lost touch with the old values, or the voices of earth and water.[110]

Contemporary Indian writing pulls ribbons of story through the fabric of tradition, changing the way the old appears while creating a fabric which can be worn today. This dynamic Indian storytelling, both old and new, works through "origin and migration myths, songs and chants, curing rites, prayers, oratory, tales, lullabies, jokes, personal narratives, and stories of bravery or visions." [111] To the extent that the writings of Zitkala-Sa use traditional Lakota symbol and traditional tribal values, she may certainly be regarded as a "culture bearer" for her people.

As we look at the writing of Zitkala-Sa,' it will become apparent that neither the urban Euro-American landscape, nor the transformed reservation landscape, fit easily into her understanding of the world according to the old ways. However, in spite of daily conflicts, Zitkala-Sa' assertively wrapped, unwrapped, and rewrapped each new encounter with her ancestral

Dakota view. Consequently, her essays, short stories and her collection of American Indian Legends contain numerous allusions to specific Lakota ceremonies, to traditional tales as told by the elders, and to characters within the Lakota mythological system. The importance of twentieth-century writers perpetuating this older world view, which can give "an identity, a feeling of rootedness, of belonging to a time and a place," is also stressed by Beatrice Medicine:

> There is something intrinsically valuable about the Lakota life-style. That view persists, no matter what kinds of culturally repressive measures--intellectual, social, or religious--we have had to endure.[112]

Notes

1. Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, "You May Consider Speaking about Your Art," I Tell You Now: Autobiographical Essays by Native American Writers, eds. Brian Swann and Arnold Krupat (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987) 59.

2. A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff, "American Indian Literatures: A Guide to Anthologies, Texts, and Research," Allen, Studies in Anmerican Indian Literature, 281.

3. Deborah Welch, "American Leader: the Story of Gertrude Bonnin." diss., University of Wyoming, 1985, 61.

4. Elizabeth Grobsmith, Lakota of the Rosebud, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1981) 11.

5. Grobsmith 5-6.

6. Marilyn Marla Nancy Powers, "Oglala Women in Myth, Ritual, and Reality," diss., Rutgers University The State University of New Jersey New Brunswick, 1990 23.

7. Raymond DeMallie, "Introduction," Sioux Indian Religion Tradition and Innovation, eds., Raymond DeMallie and Douglas R. Parks, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987) 7.

8. Peggy V. Beck and Anna L. Walters, The Sacred: Ways of Knowledge Sources of Life, (Tsaile, AZ: Navajo Community College Press, 1988) 5.

9. Careful studies of Lakota culture have been conducted by James R. Walker, whose work amongst the Oglala Sioux on the Pine Ridge Reservation between 1896 and 1914 was financed by an anthropologist, Clark Wissler, a student of Franz Boas for whom Ella Deloria worked, by the Nines brothers, and by other anthropologists as well. I have relied on Walker's work as edited by Raymond DeMaille for several reasons: it takes an Oglala perspective, although, according to DeMaille, Walker used the "word Lakota in its broadest sense...to include the Dakota speakers (the Santees and the Yanktons/Yanktonais) as well as the Lakota speakers (Tetons)...with common language (divided into three or more dialects), by common culture, and by common blood." Raymond DeMaille, "Introduction," Lakota Society, James R. Walker, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982) 5.

10. DeMaille, Sioux Indian Religion, 28.

11. Beck and Walters 9.

12. DeMaille 28.

13. These sacred forces correspond with James Walker's list--from an interview with an Oglala Medicine man, Finger--except where he calls these eight persons Wakan Tanka, "all as one and there is but one Wakan Tanka." He also indicates Skan may be equated with Wakan Tanka as the "spirit that was everywhere and that gave life and motion to everything that lives or moves." His definition of wakan is the "spirit, the ghost, and the familiar of man not born with him but given to him at the time of his birth." Walker as cited by Elaine Jahner in her "Introduction" to Lakota Myth, 9-10, by James R. Walker. It is important that this definition of wakan is NOT the same idea as the Judeo-Christian idea of Spirit or Power which is separate from humans and is also the Creator and Redeemer.

14. Grobsmith says that these are arranged "in a sacred hoop or circle, which to the Lakota, symbolizes the relationship among all living things. Within this continuous circle all things are wakan, sacred, and therefore to be regarded with respect, reverence, and awe." Grobsmith 64. But the sacred hoop also represents all that is good, while evil exists outside the hoop.

15. For a more complete classification of Lakota cosmology according to Elaine Jahner, please refer to Appendix I.

16. Bea Medicine, "Indian Women and the Renaissance of Traditional Religion," in Sioux Indian Religion Tradition and Innovation, ed. Demaille, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987) 159.

17. Ella Deloria in Spider Woman's Granddaughters, ed. Paula Gunn-Allen, 9-10. Although I will address the issue in a later chapter, it must be noted here that Deloria's definition of "civilized" significantly differs from the Jeffersonian definition which included the values of individualism and the accumulation of personal property. Also, this explanation by Deloria will be especially important as we look at Zitkala-Sa's writing since she expressed a concern for communicating the "Indian's humanity" to her Euro-American audience.

18. Jeanette Mirsky, "Ella Deloria," Cooperation and Competition Among Primitive Peoples," ed. Margaret Mead, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1937) 385-387.

19. Mirsky's essay is based on a study of the Teton Sioux, although she relied on work by Ella Deloria, a Yankton Sioux. This flexibility indicates the commonality of these particular values

and behaviors. The importance of kinship was expressed by Lakota, Nakota, and Dakota speaking tribes.

20. Black Elk told Joseph E. Brown, Raymond DeMaille, Sioux Indian Religion 31.

21. Beck and Walters 22.

22. Allen, "The Sacred Hoop," Studies in American Indian Literature 19.

31. DeMaille 31.

24. Marla N. Powers, "Mistress, Mother, Visionary Spirit: the Lakota Culture heroine," Religion in Native North America, ed. Christopher Vecsey, (Moscow: University of Idaho Press, 1990) 40.

25. Powers suggests that "White" was added later, "probably to communicate her purity." 39-40.

26. Powers, "Mistress, Mother," 46.

27. Powers 43.

28. Grobsmith 66.

29. It is important to note here that a woman, White Buffalo Calf Woman, was the source of the Lakota's life blood and spiritual experience, and that women were known to participate in all Lakota ceremonies, although Raymond DeMaille, in citing Black Elk, indicates "almost nothing has been recorded about women's sacred experiences."

30. William K. Powers, "Cosmology and the Reinvention of Culture: The Lakota Case," Canadian Journal of Native Studies 7 (1987): 170-174.

31. Bea Medicine, "Indian Women and the Renaissance of Traditional Religion," 162. Jeannette Mirsky lists similar values of the Teton Sioux: generosity, hospitality, bravery, and fortitude. She also indicates that the value of bravery is linked with their practice of stealing horses from other tribes. "Nothing is involved in a man's accumulating riches except his own courage. If he lacks that, he is poor; if he is brave he can steal horses and fearlessly run in the buffalo hunt and acquire food."

32. Rebecca Tsosie, "Changing Women" 7.

33. Tsosie 9-10.

34. Bea Medicine in Gretchen Bataille, "Preface," American Indian Women, Telling Their Lives, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984) viii.

35. DeMaille also suggests Walker's work is important since "Almost nothing has been published from women's points of view about the Lakotas, and little has been recorded about Lakota women in general...Walker's materials provide a fair amount of material that may help to increase our knowledge of the role of women." Although contemporary research and writing by women would contradict DeMaille's "almost nothing" comment, Walker's research as edited by DeMaille is still useful. In his preface Walker's Lakota Society, Raymond DeMaille presents an important qualification that I wish to recognize as well: "The documents on the structure of society reveal dis-agreement among informants about the details of the organization of their society and about the past develop- ment of subgroups. This is a good reminder that the neat structures which Walker, Wissler, the Nines brothers--and we today--look for may not accurately characterize the traditional Lakota view of their society. The Lakota perspective seems to have been much more flexible, allowing for disparate views that correlated with family, political, and other interests...a reflection of the dynamism that is such an important characteristic of Lakota life." DeMaille in "Introduction," James R. Walker, Lakota Society, ed. Raymond J. DeMaille, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982) xiii.

36. Walker, Lakota Society 82.

37. Katherine Weist, "Beasts of Burden and Menial Slaves: Nineteenth Century Observations of Northern Plains Indian Women," The Hidden Half, Studies of Plains Indian Women, eds. Patricia Albers and Beatrice Medicine, (New York: University Press of America, Inc., 1983) 41.

38. It is important to note that the term, own, probably held a different significance for these Indians than it did for Europeans who first wrote about this property and ownership. According to several contemporary sources, ownership to the Plains Indian implied responsibility more than possession, obligation more than control. "The Euro-American observers thought that women were bought by their husbands because they noted that men gave horses to the women's fathers or brothers. In actuality, they were probably witnessing only one facet of a set of exchanges between the relatives of the groom or the groom himself and the family of the bride...Cross-culturally this type of exchange tends to be associated with an equality between the two kin groups rather than a ranked relationship of giver and receiver." Rather than representing the purchase of a wife, this exchange represented the cementing of the contract between two families. Weist 44.

39. Mirsky 419.

40. Contemporary sources such as Powers and Medicine would argue against the more extreme measures of discipline, though. They indicate there is very little evidence for either.

41. Ella Deloria in Raymond DeMaille, "Male and Female in Traditional lakota Culture," The Hidden Half, eds. Albers and Medicine 260.

42. Walker, Lakota Society 57.

43. DeMaille, "Male and Female in Traditional Lakota Culture," The Hidden Half, Studies of Plains Indian Women, eds. Patricia Albers and Beatrice Medicine, (New York: University Press of America, Inc., 1983) 240. DeMaille was using Sword, Walker's source.

44. Walker, Lakota Society 58.

45. Weist, "Beasts of Burden" 42.

46. Walker, Lakota Society, 66. One such society honored women who had lost a husband, brother or cousin in war. These women could wear eagle quills on their heads in honor of this membership. DeMaille, in his essay "Male and Female in Traditional Lakota Culture," indicated several societies: Porcupine Quill Workers, Winyan Tapika--Praiseworthy Women, a wakan society for virgins, Owns-Alone society for middle aged women who had only known one man, Tanners society for women who made tipi covers, and the Women's Medicine cult--a wakan society of women who had animal visions and who gathered to prepare for and predict the outcome of war parties.

47. DeMaille, "Male and Female" 241.

48. Walker, Lakota Society 52.

49. Walker 73.

50. Walker 63.

51. Walker 77.

52. Weist 29.

53. Weist 12.

54. Powers, Oglala Sioux 19.

55. Deloria as cited by DeMaille in "Male and Female" 242.

56. Mary Jane Schneider, "Women's Work: An Examination of Women's Roles in Plains Indian Arts and Crafts," in Hidden Half 101.

57. Medicine, "Indian Women and the Renaissance of Traditional Religion,"in Sioux Indian Religion 161.

58. Bea Medicine, "'Warrior Women'- Sex Role Alternatives for Plains Indian Women," in Hidden Half 277.

59. Medicine, "Indian Women and the Renaissance of Traditional Religion" 171.

60. Lame Deer in Allen, "The Sacred Hoop, "Studies in American Indian Literature 18-19.

61. Colson as cited by Mary Jane Schneider, "Women's Work: An Examination of Women's Roles in Plains Indian Arts and Crafts," The Hidden Half, Studies of Plains Indian Women, eds. Patricia Albers and Beatrice Medicine, (New York: University Press of America, Inc., 1983) 117.

62. Powers, Oglala Sioux 20.

63. Powers, "Mistress, Mother, Visionary Spirit" 36-37.

64. In this sense, she qualifies as the "Culture Heroine," as defined by Hultkrantz and cited by Powers.

65. Powers 39-42.

66. Powers, Oglala Sioux 60.

67. Walker, Lakota Society 72.

68. Medicine, "Indian Women and the Renaissance" 169.

69. Medicine 163.

70. Medicine 167-8.

71. Dexter Fisher, "Historical Perspectives for American Indian Women," The Third Woman: Minority Women Writers of the United States, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980) 13.

72. Medicine 165.

73. Patricia Albers, "Introduction: New Perspectives on Plains Indian Women," in The Hidden Half 14.

74. Paula Gunn Allen, Spider Woman's Granddaughters, ed. Paula Gunn Allen, (New York: Fawcett Columbine Publishing, 1990) 2.

75. Simon Ortiz, in I Tell You Now, eds. Brian Swann and Arnold Krupat, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987) 187.

76. Deborah Welch, "American Leader," diss., 35.

77. Cook-Lynn, "American Indian Literatures in Servitude" 5.

78. Cook-Lynn 4.

79. Although several Indian and non-Indian critics would disagree with Cook-Lynn and Momaday, this paper serves as my answer to the question, "How is it to be experienced?"

80. N. Scott Momaday, "Foreword," Native American Stories, told by Joseph Bruchac, (Golden, Colorado: Fulcrum Publishing, 1991)

81. Welch 34.

82. Allen, Studies in American Indian Literature 4, and Grandmother Spider's Granddaughters 1.

83. I would disagree with Momaday who implies that listeners and readers outside the community, outside the "common experience," or in another language tradition, cannot experience the stories. It is true, though, that their experience will be different. For this reason, I have developed a cultural context for the study of Zitkala-Sa and Ella Deloria.

84. "told to people" stories is Paula Gunn Allen's phrase.

85. Momaday.

86. Julian Rice, Lakota Storytelling: Black Elk, Ella Deloria, and Frank Fools Crow, (New York: Peter Lang, 1989), 63.

87. Julian Rice, "Why the Lakota Still Have Their Own: Ella Deloria's Dakota Texts," Western American Literature 19 Fall (1984): 206.

88. Deborah Welch, "American Indian Leader" 65.

89. Rice, "Why the Lakota" 207.

90. Powers, Oglala Women in Myth, Ritual, and Reality 128.

91. Dexter Fisher, Third Woman 7.

92. Elaine Jahner, ed., Introduction, James R. Walker, Lakota Myth 17.

93. Jahner 24.

94. Beck and Walters 60.

95. Ella Deloria's system from her introduction to Dakota Texts, PAES 17 (1932).

96. Zitkala-Sa, Old Indian Legends, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985) v.

97. Deloria 5.

98. Zitkala-Sa v.

99. Deloria 5.

100. Andrew Wiget, Native American Literature, (Boston: Twayne Publishers 1985) 20.

101. Allen, Spider Woman's Granddaughters 5.

102. Grobsmith 87.

103. Jahner, Lakota Myth 29.

104. Beck and Walters 59.

105. Gretchen Bataille, American Indian Women, Telling Their Lives, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984) 30.

106. Fisher, The Third Woman 14.

107. Luther Standing Bear in Beck and Walters 59.

108. Allen, Spider Woman's Grandaughters 5.

109. Bataille 3.

110. Craig Lesley, "Introduction," Talking Leaves: Contemporary Native American Short Stories, eds. Craig Lesley and Katheryn Stavrakis, (New York: Dell Publishing, 1991) xviii.

111. Bataille 3.

112. Medicine, "Indian Women and the Renaissance" 159.

CHAPTER III

The Yankton Reservation

> "Well, it happened on the day we moved camp that your sister and uncle were both very sick. Many others were ailing, but there seemed to be no help. We traveled many days and nights; not in the grand, happy way that we moved camp when I was a little girl, but we were driven, my child, driven like a herd of buffalo."
>
> from "Indian Childhood" by Zitkala-Sa

Previous to 1800, the Yankton ancestors of Gertrude Bonnin had traveled across half the continent. Alan Woolworth, in his "Ethnohistorical Report on the Yankton Sioux," notes "Sioux of the West do not cultivate the earth. They live entirely by the chase."[1] Twice a year they had followed the migration of buffalo from the upper Mississippi River valley to the Black Hills. From there they had returned to southeastern Minnesota where they would collect stone for their Sacred Pipes from the "red-stone quarry."

In the early 1800's, because of their location, being near to traders coming up the Missouri River, the Yanktons were the first Sioux band to make contact with Euro-Americans. Many forts and trading posts were established on their land. Historian Herbert T. Hoover, in his 1988 work on the Yankton Sioux, called this contact time "mutually beneficial with non-Indians" as the Yanktons chose to live in "peaceful coexistence." Men such as Pierre Choteau, Jr., George Catlin, John Audubon had visited, traded with, and married the Yanktons.[2] However, the following comment about this contact experience would contradict Hoover's conclusion regarding "mutual benefit." Edwin Thompson Denig, a trader who recorded the Plains Indians' customs for Father Pierre Jean De Smet, acknowledged

their friendliness to whites. However, he was aware of their losses due to their contacts with whites:

> ...they have lost a great many by diseases caught along (the California route). At this time we do not hear of any damage done by the Yanctons, nor is there evidence of any spirit of resistance either to emigration or to the policy pursued by the general government with regard to them.[3]

Denig must have expected resistance since the situation was definitely not of "mutual benefit" to the Yankton people.

Possibly due to their "more peacable nature," according to Herbert T. Hoover, as well as to the unrelenting Euro-American encroachment, the Yanktons were the first Sioux to cede land to the United States Government--2.2 million acres in the treaty at Prairie du Chien, 1830. Still, in 1850 thirteen Sioux tribes, including the Yankton, claimed--by use--eighty million acres, or 2,500 acres for every member of the federation. The Yankton Band alone had claimed land from the upper Des Moines to the upper Missouri River valleys, 13.5 million acres. Still, more and more traders and settlers migrated to this area and "squatted" until 1858 when the U.S. Government called for Yankton removal to a reservation in the Missouri Hills.[4]

On April 19, 1858, the Yanktons ceded all remaining land to the government except 431,000 acres lying thirty miles along the Missouri River and twenty miles back, including 15,000 acres of river-bottom. The agents reported its proximity to the town of Yankton: 80 miles by water and 65 by land above Yankton on the East Bank. The tribe was to receive $1,600,000--about ten cents an acre--in decreasing annuity payments until 1908. Within these reservation boundaries, and with these annuity funds, federal agents would work towards dismantling the tribal structure and

building Euro-American civilization on a farming base. But the work had already begun, and by 1889, the Great Sioux Nation, the three major alliances of Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota, and the "Seven Council Fires," were rendered politically meaningless by the reservation system.

The Yanktons' nineteenth-century contact experience differed significantly from that of the northern and western bands. Possibly the Yanktons resisted non-violently and with greater accommodation because Head Chief Struck-by-the-Ree told his people at the Yankton Agency to "follow a course of cooperation and acceptance... gather on the reservation, stay at peace."[5] While other Sioux tribes violently struggled against the invasion of Euro-Americans, the Yankton people appeared to have accepted the foreign presence amongst them. It is true United States Indian Policy, as implemented by local government agents and Christian missions, worked to erradicate tribal culture. But the policy on the Yankton Reservation was more liberal than on other Sioux reservations where legal edicts against native languages and tribal ceremonies were strictly enforced. In the northern and western bands, the resistance of leaders such as Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse culminated in forced surrender. In contrast to the obligatory elimination of all traditional practices on other reservations, only the Sun Dance was made illegal on the Yankton Reservation.

In yearly reports to the Department of the Interior, various Yankton agents described the reservation--as they saw it--and the economic, political, and cultural situation of the reservation Indians. Nevertheless, even as the agents claimed progress towards establishing native self-sufficiency and assimilation, these reports also betray the

truth of another story, a story preserved in the walls of damp-sod houses and government boarding schools. It is the story of a people's rapid disintegration yet silent resistance to unrelenting oppression. What follows here is a partial summary and interpretation of the reports from 1874 to 1902 which may provide insight into the landscape of Gertrude Simmons Bonnin's own story.[6]

Over the years, the agents made observations about the nature of the Yankton people. Beginning in 1874, and continuing for at least twenty years, agents reported the Yanktons exhibited "no drunkenness, no war parties, no need for jail, no law except treaty and agent's word, no quarrels, no fighting" (353). The year Gertrude Simmons was born, the agent described the people as "more favorably located than other Sioux ...further removed from hostile influences, friendly...a strictly temperate people, at peace with all tribes around them...without ill feelings towards Christians--more like indifference"(444). The relationship between the agents and the Indians before 1884 appears to have been positive, with the Chiefs gathering around the agency to relax and talk. However, in 1884 agent J. F. Kinney eliminated that practice, and a later report indicates the Indians were less "temperate" and more inclined to resist his stringent policies:

> The Yanktons have never been at war with the Government nor have they as a band depredated upon white settlements. So they haven't been punished as other tribes and consequently are less willing to subjugate themselves to Government and live in less fear of subjugation. Here men openly place the law at defiance and treat with disdain the wise words of one of the highest officers in the Indian Service.[7]

Most significant in these yearly reports are the many overt contradictions in fact and tone, which may be interpreted in several ways.

First, government expectations strongly contrasted with ensuing realities as agents thrust their Euro-American lifestyle on a resistant landscape and people. Second, agent after agent confronted and/or dodged changes in weather, changes in responses or initiatives from the Indians and the government, and changes in the physical and economic conditions of the Indian people. Third, and most important, I believe the contradictions indicate resolute denial by both the government and the agents--a denial of the failure of the U.S. Government's Indian Policy.

Policy dictated that reservations would provide the opportunity for Indians to learn "efficient methods for obtaining a livelihood from the land."[8] And so agents in 1876 and 1893 reported it was good land, "rich and productive." Year after year agents expressed their belief that the land would yield good crops of corn, enough wheat to feed the nation, and enough grass for Eastern markets. However, as early as 1874, an agent recommended the [Yanktons] be moved to Indian Territory because the country on the Missouri lacked sufficient resources for farming, and another in 1877 called it a "woodless and desolate prairie." Three out of every four years, fields yielded as little as one bushel to the acre due to hailstorms, grasshoppers, "hot blasting wind," and drought so severe that shade trees died. In 1896 when they did raise a good crop, the Indians were forced to take a "seriously low price" because they had no place to store it, and "white neighbors would never pay a fair price." By 1902, no more seed wheat was provided since it cost as much to produce as it would bring in a sale. No doubt agents were reluctant to admit their own failures to build successful farming operations, and so they blamed the land, the neighboring whites, and they blamed the Indians.

Development of the work ethic in the Indian was an important part of the "civilizing" process, so in 1874, women were weaving cloth and making willow baskets. However, in three years, an agent plainly reported they had discontinued the manufacture of clothing because the "department didn't favor it." At the same time, some Indian men were selling lumber to steamboats, and others were apprenticing to blacksmiths, carpenters and herders. In 1874, the agent reported the Indians had "given up the hunt" and were an "agricultural people," yet in 1887 fewer acres were cultivated than in 1874 due to the "natural (dis)inclination to farm." But then again, in the same year, the agent said the Indians were "more disposed to work than ever before. While in 1883 many were still not working, by 1900 70% of the Indians were reported laboring in "civilized pursuits." Nevertheless, by 1902 the agency had replaced Indian employees with whites. James Staley, the Superintendent and Special Disbursing Agent, wrote with little sympathy: "It is certainly a mistake to employ an Indian on his own reservation." So much for government policy to turn hunters into Euro-American farmers and laborers.

Whether the Indians worked hard or not, the land would seldom yield even a subsistence crop, and agents refused to accept that fact. So, together with continued provisions of sheep, cattle, and farm implements, the government extended the agricultural and labor policy with intensive agricultural training at the government school. The government also continued to reduce rations as an incentive for hard work. In 1876, the year Gertrude Simmons was born, the agent said that if the ration were removed, there would be "utter destitution and great suffering, and a general breakup of the tribe." Yet eight years later, the agent J.F.

Kinney, with paternalistic tone, strongly recommended issuing less flour since: "less rations, more farming, more self-reliance, less dependence, more manhood."

Persistant was the belief that education in farming and in English would prepare the young Indian for success in the wider Euro-American world. In his annual report for 1887, Agent Kinney wrote:

> Education cuts the cord which binds them to a pagan life, places the Bible in their hands, and substitutes the true God for the false one, Christianity in place of idolatry, civilization in place of superstitution, morality in place of vice, cleanliness in place of filth, industry in place of idleness, self-respect in place of servility, and, in a word, an elevated humanity in place of abject degredation.[9]

In 1874, St. Paul's Episcopal boarding school for girls and boys, three day-schools and two Presbyterian schools served 200 reservation children. In contrast with the government schools, St. Paul's was still educating in the Dakota language in 1890, and two church services on Sunday were conducted in Dakota. But the agents recommended the replacement of Dakota with English, and in 1900 John W. Harding recommended ceasing of funding to St. Paul's because "it is more sympathetic with Indians in conflict with Government policies."

An agent in 1880 offered the most praise for an off-the-reservation school in Pennsylvania--Carlisle--the school where Gertrude Simmons would eventually teach. By 1887 and continuing into the next century, agents rejected this same school in favor of the reservation Industrial Boarding school. Not only did schools like Carlisle take their "brightest" students, but one agent disapproved of the children's extended separation from parents. Children would "lose their health in Eastern schools." However, some school officials objected to eastern schools because they

would then have to fill reservation school quotas with "children earlier rejected for ill health." By 1899, only two reservation schools remained, and in 1901 St. Paul's school closed. Repeatedly agents and reporting school superintendents complained about poor average attendance and parents who didn't value sending children to school. Although education in English was a primary goal of Indian policy, two generations after its introduction to the Yanktons, not even a third could read or do business in English. J. F. Kinney reports that Chief Struck-by-the-Ree "opposed formal education for Indian children for awhile." These facts indicate not only the failure of a government program, but they also demonstrate the Yankton people's resistance to forces which would extinguish their language and culture.

Establishment of houses and the elimination of teepees was another project for reservation agents. They knew teepees provided a continuation of the tribal system where families could move and gather for ceremonies, feasts and dances. So every year agents reported how many houses had been built or repaired and how many Indians were still living in teepees. In 1874, one half lived in houses; by 1893 the teepee was used primarily "for a tent or for an occasional outing or journey," although in 1896 the agent reported how costly it was to build houses because there was no timber on the reservation and neighboring whites charged such high prices. Once families were located on allotments, they returned to living in teepees, and agents had to again encourage them to build houses on their own land. The continued presence of teepees even into the twentieth century demonstrated the Yanktons' resistance to assimilation. The Indians knew

that a log house with dirt roof and floor was a poor substitute for a well ventilated teepee.

But the damp-sod houses and the parents' reluctance to send children to reservation schools indicated a problem far more serious than drought-ridden crops or reduced annuities and rations. From a population of 2,600 in 1857, the numbers of Yanktons and mixed-bloods on the Yankton Reservation dropped to 1,678 in 1902. Although agents had suggested some had scattered to other Sioux bands, the testimony of a physican in 1890 plainly indicated the population was decreasing due to disease. Epidemics of sore eyes, sore throats, influenza, consumption, scrofula (tuberculosis), measles, chicken pox and whooping cough raged through these Yankton people, especially in the schools where such highly contagious diseases found captive victims. Although one angry agent in 1884 suggested the prevalence of disease was due to "stupid indifference to laws of health," a more sympathetic physician in 1901 blamed "poverty and one-room houses devoid of ventilation." In 1894 a physician indicated that few were disease free; in 1899 twenty-one children died before the end of the school year, and in 1901 ninety-five people died due to "consumption and old age." The agency report in 1902 showed a comparison between the death rate among the white population surrounding the reservation --8/1000, and among the Indians--24/1000. In spite of the magnitude of this tragedy, little is reported other than numbers and names of diseases. The Yankton people were dying; the Indians themselves knew it, and so did the agents. Mothers would keep children home to prevent their contracting a deadly disease, and agents suspected the deaths of

children were kept secret so the families could continue to receive maximum rations.

While federal policies continued to separate the Indians from their land, the government also refused rightful payment for land and labor. These policies further compounded the problems of disease and poverty due to crop failures. Several agents reported the government's failure to fulfill promised annuity payments. Although the Yankton tribe was to receive $40,000 a year at the beginning, they had never received more than $15,000. And yet, the annuity payments were stopped in 1908 as per the original treaty. The Federal Government also failed to pay scouts who had aided General Sully against the more violent Santee Sioux in 1864. More concerned agents, such as Forster in 1893, would request payment. But not until 1895, after most had died, were the remaining scouts and their heirs reimbursed. Yankton agents as early as 1878 recommended the individual allotment of tribal lands. Each family head would receive 160 acres, and single persons both over and under eighteen would receive less, leaving many unallotted acres. In fact, in 1884 Kinney figured that after allottment, 331,049 acres would be left which could be sold for the "Indians' benefit," and 231,049 acres would result in payment of $36,000 per year for schools, while $93,147 could be used for farming machinery.[10] Chiefs and many followers opposed allottment, and Kinney reports one Indian even captured a surveyor's tripod. He believed the chiefs opposed allottment because it would mean loss of power for them. Nevertheless, Congress passed the Allotment or Dawes Severalty Act on February 8, 1887 which divided the reservation into individual allotments to promote the Western-European idea of self-sufficiency. As of May 21, 1895, the

government proclaimed: "lands ceded by Yankton tribe of Sioux Indians are open to settlement. These lands shall be offered for sale to ACTUAL and BONAFIDE settlers."[11] In essence, the Allotment Act contributed to the further loss of Indian territorial integrity when much of the "surplus" land was purchased and leased by non-Indians.

The Yankton agent in 1892 rejected the idea of leasing because he wanted Indians to "make use of that land" themselves. Although his comment may indicate support for the Indians, he was probably more interested in pushing government policy. Nevertheless, land leasing did provide revenue, and so it grew rapidly. In 1895, 9 lots were leased on 3-year terms at 6 1/2 cents an acre; in 1901, 700 lease contracts returned a combined $10,000; and in 1902, 836 leases for grazing--at 15 cents an acre--and farming--at $1 an acre--were contracted, with 53 leases waiting examination. Problems within the tribe due to the sale and leasing of surplus lands did not go unnoticed by the agent in 1893. "People are divided and it is causing serious friction."

In spite of this devastating disintegration, the agents still pushed assimilation and the appearance of "civilization." They wanted to rid the people of "communism" because it rewarded the idle. The agents wanted to eliminate the practices of taking plural wives, of clinging to the "faith of their fathers," of "fealty to chiefs," of gathering for dancing and feasting and of keeping the means of savagry--bows, arrows, and ponies. In many ways they were successful. Kinney would never consult or "make pets" of chiefs; he refused passes for Indians to visit other tribes, and he stopped the custom of give-aways after funerals which he called "vandalism." Evidence of Kinney's blindness in the face cultural loss and

improvishment is especially vivid in a letter which he received from "a friend" in 1888. With the exception of words from Chief Struck-by-the-Ree, this is the single recorded Indian voice in nearly thirty years of agency reports. Apparently ignorant of the implicit irony in this letter, Kinney commented that he regarded this "obedience to authority" as "gratifying."

> I used to dance, now I don't. I used to give ponies when mourning, now I don't. You told me to stay at home, [and work the farm] and I have done so. So I always mind you and I am getting poor. But I know you help me.
> Signed "your friend"[12]

But the Yanktons did resist the dismantling of their culture. Still they were racing ponies, and dancing, and feasting. Still in 1897, an agent reported: "An Indian's hospitality is endless. He will divide his last morsel with his neighbor." That same year, a missionary said, "habits and modes of thought are deep channels worn in the solid rock," and mothers would "cling so tenaciously to the traditions and customs of the tribe."[13]

On the Yankton Reservation, between 1874 and 1902, agents differed in their approach and in their level of sympathy for their "charges." Historian Herbert T. Hoover assigns a dual responsibility for the ultimate survival of the Yankton culture. He believes the federal government acted on a more moderate approach, believing "forced culture change and Christianization would be accomplished more efficiently if English were not forced immediately on the Indians." According to Hoover, missionaries and Indian agents encouraged a blend of Indian and non-Indian customs, "so long as retained traditions did not hinder adjustment to non-Indian habits and beliefs." On the Yankton Reservation, Federal policy sought to "undermine" cultural traditions, to "exert social pressure" and to "offer

alternatives" to cultural activities, rather than making those practices illegal. They discouraged, rather than forbade, traditional tribal customs.[14] Hoover also credits the "cooperation" of the Yankton people in this "civilization" process. I believe the agent reports indicate not cooperation but the resiliance of a people and a culture, in spite of the forces which would extinguish that heritage forever. Regardless of the fluxuations in policy and approach, and regardless of "unprecedented crop failures" and the prevalence of disease, J.A. Smith described a people in 1894 still demonstrating their resistance to oppression and their cultural tenacity:

> When their crop is harvested, most of those who have no houses quit their allottments and return to the river bottom, where they spend the winter in their tepees or such log huts as they can construct. Here they congregate in villages and spend the long winters in idleness, varying the monotony by recounting their past deeds of valor in war, by dancing, and often by pastimes calculated to retard the efforts made for their advancement.(303-305)

This was the cultural and physical landscape of Gertrude Simmons Bonnin's childhood and young adulthood. Five conclusions may be drawn from this examination of the Yankton people's nineteenth-century landscape and world. In the first place, the political, economic, and linguistic structures of the traditional Yankton Sioux world were complex and stable, even as the Yanktons existed in an interdependent relationship with other Sioux tribes. Second, during the nineteenth century, they suffered devastating losses in territory and population, and yet they retained much of their culture and language. Third, most of the government efforts towards "civilization" were directed towards the men, leaving the women to retain their more traditional roles within the family. Fourth, although the Yankton people exhibited a "temperate" nature, perhaps they carried a

deep-seated anger which would surface in time. And fifth, the children raised in this environment would have absorbed in their souls the suffering as well as the cultural heritage of their people while they also learned the culture and language of the dominant Euro-American society.

In contrast to the perceived literary void of most Indian tribes at the turn of the century, the early emergence of a feminine literary voice within this Yankton tradition, and her attention to the victimization of her people, would support the above conclusions. It appears ironic that this particular tribe, today, may provide a very strong tie to its ancestral culture because over one-hundred years ago it was more unwilling than other Plains tribes to physically fight the Euro-American invasion. It is true that the Yanktons, like other Lakotas, suffered rapid disintegration, but their near-silent resistance culminated in the voices of women like Zitkala-Sa, Ella Deloria, Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, and Beatrice Medicine. These writers and scholars, as mixed-bloods, also have refused to relinquish their connections to tribal tradition and to the "survival and joy and sorrow" of their native heritage. Consequently, when they have called themselves Dakotah, they have acknowledged their past--the years of conquest and resistance, of demoralization and survival, of pride and experience, of story and ceremony and communal reality.

Notes

1. Alan Woolworth, Ethnohistorical Report on the Yankton Sioux, (1924) 184.

2. Herbert T. Hoover, Indians of North America: The Yankton Sioux, (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1988) 30.

3. Edwin Thompson Denig, Five Indian Tribes of the Upper Missouri, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961) 38.

4. Hoover, The Yankton Sioux 13-31.

5. Hoover 34.

6. Annual Reports of the Department of the Interior and Indian Affairs, Report of the Commissioner and Appendixes, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1874-1902). I have not noted page numbers for data but instead have given the year and the agent's name within the text whenever relevant or necessary.

7. Yankton Agent J. F. Kinney (1887) 146.

8. Bernard W. Sheehan, Seeds of Extinction: Jeffersonian Philanthropy and the American Indian, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1973) 15.

9. Agent Kinney, (1887) 143.

10. Yankton Agent (1884) 101.

11. (1896) Agent reported the government proclamation of cessions of unallotted lands. 462-3.

12. Yankton Agent Kinney, (1888) 76.

13. Yankton Agent J.A. Smith, (1896) 308.

14. Hoover 45.

CHAPTER IV

Zitkala-Sa (Gertrude Simmons Bonnin): The Native Voice From Exile

Grandma's Dying Poem

She's somehow what your life has been
all along,
You realize--your life has been
a mirror of her ways, the reflection
slightly different by small changes
time and fashion make
Paula Gunn-Allen (Laguna Pueblo/Lakota)[1]

Like many Indian writers today who come from mixed tribal and Euro-American backgrounds and who live in the urban landscape, Paula Gunn-Allen's connection with the Sioux tradition may be considered marginal. Still, the speaker in "Grandma's Dying Poem" celebrates an identification with her feminine ancestors, with the roots of her being. Given "small" variations, Indian women's lives have mirrored the power, the values, and the behaviors of their mothers and of their grandmothers. Those were the women, like Zitkala-Sa (Gertrude Simmons Bonnin) who refused to submit to victimization and oppression by fighting "to establish the strength of tribal identities and responsibilities" for Indian peoples who were "compelled" to live away from the reservation.[2]

> Well, you can guess how queer I felt--away from my own people--homeless--penniless--and even without a name! Then I chose to make a name for myself--and I guess I have made "Zitkala-Sa" known--for even Italy writes it in her language. (June 1901)[3]

This is the language of displacement, of homelessness--the language and the voice of an exile, Zitkala-Sa (Red Bird). In an article entitled "Reflections on Exile," Edward Said defines the recent plight of exiles and their subsequent roles in the development of literature. He sees the exile as an outsider, out-of-place, alone, friendless, prevented from

returning home, never secure, never satisfied, and permanently torn from "a native place" or a "true home." The exile can never belong to the present landscape, and her experiences in the present will always occur against the memory of another, very distant, landscape. Wallace Stevens called exile the "mind of winter," and Simone Weil expressed the exile's fundamental need: "to be rooted...perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul."[4]

Throughout her life, Zitkala-Sa claimed her identity as the daughter of Tate I Yohin Win, a Yankton/Dakotah woman. She never denied her mother, nor her "own people," even as they rejected her. Shaping her works with tribal experiences, she wrote from a strength which was both communal and cyclical, drawn from the past and shared both inside and outside her specific tribal society. According to Deborah Welch, Zitkala-Sa knew the "sorrow of displaced persons." In her exile, she used the power of her heritage to transcend her victimization, to define herself, and to find her own voice.

Edward Said believes that exiled persons, such as Zitkala-Sa, frequently act in determinate ways to compensate for their loss of home, of roots, of native place. They "clutch difference like a weapon" and insist on their right to not belong. They "create a new world to rule" in literature, politics, and competitive games. For those that write, their new--very ethnocentric--world frequently resembles the old world. While exiles "break barriers of thought," they "compel the world to accept their vision by using willfulness, exaggeration and overstatement." And they may even "assemble a nation out of exile by constructing a national history, by reviving an ancient language, and by founding national institutions." On

the other hand, at the same time exiles are creating new worlds out of old, their present environments exert pressures on them to affiliate, to join, to acculturate, and to assimilate.

We have no way of knowing the specific historical context of Zitkala-Sa's autobiographical essays and Indian stories, nor should we presume to recreate a context by using her essays as a source. But biographical information together with agency reports, contemporary opinion and philosophy, and contemporary criticism of her writing can establish a cultural, temporal, linguistic, and aesthetic context, while it also establishes a context of exile. This knowledge can further develop our interpretation of her work, especially as it pertains to the years between 1876 and 1902.

Gertrude Simmons was born in 1876 to a Yankton Sioux woman called "Tate I Yohin Win (Reaches for the Wind)" and a white man who deserted the family before she was born; she was named after her mother's second husband who was also a white man. Whether she experienced discrimination on the reservation because of her mixed heritage, we can't know for sure. But the agents were counting the mixed as separate from the full-blood Indians, and the numbers were growing. By 1880, 258 persons--one-eighth of the non-white population--were identified as mixed-blood. Nevertheless, in spite of her mixed heritage, Gertrude Simmons was exposed to the language, and to the cultural and social traditions of her mother's people.[5] She was also exposed to the dramatic disintegration of those people as they suffered territorial, economic, and physical losses.

The Yankton agent in 1876 was probably aware of this family since he reported knowledge of two white men married to Indian women living amongst

1,992 Indians on the reservation. He also reported about 50 were scattered in other Sioux bands, although it is possible this number and situation represents an attempt to justify the decreasing numbers of reservation Indians. The agent described the people as a "well-to-do and strictly temperate people, at peace with all tribes around them," but he also said the "heathen" (the agent's synonym for Indian) were still in the majority and were rather indifferent to the "Christian and semi-civilized." He thought the Yanktons were "more favorably located" than other Sioux tribes and were generally removed from all "hostile influences." In 1876, several "young men were sent East to be educated." Although he was "confident" the reservation could support itself with cattle and wheat by the year 1908, he also indicated current farming problems. Year after year they had planted wheat, so the land was no longer "suitable" and needed to "lie fallow." Also, Indian dogs posed problems for sheep herders. Consequently, many Indians, discouraged with farming, returned to their old homes on the prairies. The agent in 1876 sounds more compassionate than others who came later. He recognized external causes for agricultural problems, and he expressed his concern for tribal survival: "there will be utter destitution and great suffering, and a general breakup of the tribe if the ration is removed." However, he also perpetuates the myth that Indians would one day become self-sufficient, Christian and "civilized," through an agricultural economy. At the end of his report, the agent says, "we can produce wheat to feed the entire nation."[6]

Although this information is presented from the Anglo agent's perspective, it is still important as we read Zitkala Sa's

autobiographical essays and stories because this was her "home" community. Of all the Sioux tribes, the Yanktons had experienced the least conflict with non-Indians. Head Chief Struck-by-the-Ree, the Yanktons' last Chief before U.S. Government policy eliminated tribal government, worked in the fields and encouraged his people to cooperate with agents. Possibly Gertrude Simmons had heard his voice as he "used his great skills of orating to prevent angry young men from joining leaders of upper bands" in violent resistance to federal policies.[7] However, both the land and the people did resist Euro-American influences. Consequently, the transfer from a hunting to an agrarian economy was unsuccessful, for the most part, and the Indians continued to practice their traditional lifestyle without forced restrictions. Although disease was a continuing problem, rations provided enough food to sustain them. Nevertheless, the Yanktons continued to live under the impact of the "heathen" label and the civilization myth which would continue to foster greater discrimination and consequent hardships in years to come.

The years of Gertrude Simmons' childhood represent a time of continuing decline, yet positive resistance, for the Yankton people. A new agent in 1880 reported that the frequent changes in agents had caused distrust and demoralization amongst the Indians. Tribal numbers were dropping as children and the elderly died of malaria and scrofulus (tuberculosis); and while they continued to till more land, crops remained poor from drought or too much rain. On the other hand, the Yanktons were resisting cultural change and desintegration. Agents continued to complain about poor attendance at school and with tribal insistance on classes being taught in the Dakota language. But the translation of the Bible into Dakota

together with church services conducted in "Sioux" bear testimony to the Yankton's persistent struggle against cultural loss. According to agents' reports, cattle raising was failing because Indians kept killing them (after their hunting tradition), and the agent in 1877 complained too many Indians were armed. But a new agent in 1884, J.F. Kinney, who would remain until 1888, would pose the most serious threat so far to the life and culture of the tribe. In those four years, he would push for the elimination of all tribal practices--and he would push for the sale of Indian land after allotment, so the "Indian would learn how to farm as white settlements surround him."[8] By contrast, in his 1886 report, Kinney indicates some concern for the economic welfare of the Indian when he comments about the marriage of white men to Indian women on the reservation: "It is an evil which should be stopped. It is an injustice to the Indian because the men do it to get land."[9] Quite possibly this was Ellen Simmons' situation.

At the age of eight, Gertrude Simmons left the reservation for a Quaker missionary school, White's Manual Institute in Indiana, where she would learn English and Euro-American customs. Her autobiographical essay indicates she left "against her mother's wishes."[10] Possibly Ellen Simmons opposed the move because she had already experienced separation from a child when Gertrude's older brother, David, went to school in the east. Possibly she didn't approve of the resultant changes in her son. Also, the distant removal of young girls was a new experience, since only boys had gone east just eight years previous. Nevertheless, Ellen Simmons wasn't alone in opposing off-reservation schooling. Even the reservation agents were opposed to the proselytizing of eastern educators who took the

brightest young people away from the reservation. This concern by the agents would indicate the strength of eastern persuasion. Missionaries were successfully tearing children from their parents in a manner not unlike 18th century Puritans who would take Indian children hostage to educate them into civilization. For fear of disease as well as acculturation, many Indian parents had long opposed sending their children to the local reservation schools, let alone to distant boarding schools.

But her mother's opposition was critical for Gertrude Simmons whose writing reveals a strong sense of the traditional values of family, kinship, and respect for elders. Consequently, her three-year separation at boarding school would mark the beginning of a mesh of seemingly unresolvable conflicts which she would suffer throughout her life between herself and her family, her tribal community, her Indian peers at boarding school, her teachers and supervisors, and the American non-Indian community at large.

Three years later when Gertrude Simmons returned to her mother and to the traditional Yanktons on the reservation, she was "highly suspect because in their minds she had abandoned, even betrayed, the Indian way of life by getting an education in the white man's world." [11] Yearly agent reports would substantiate this objection by the Yankton Indian community. They indicate Chief Struck-By-The-Ree objected to education for awhile, and their reports also indicate the Indians continued to practice their traditional way of life in spite of government efforts to eradicate that tradition. In response to this criticism, she wrote the letter I cited at the beginning of this chapter:

> ...my brother's wife--angry with me because I insisted upon getting an education--said I had deserted home and

> I might give up my brother's name "simmons" too. Well, you can guess how queer I felt--away from my own people--homeless--penniless--and even without a name! Then I chose to make a name for myself--and I guess I have made "Zitkala-Sa" (Red Bird) known--for even Italy writes it in her language. (June 1901) [12]

Just as the conflict between her heritage and her desire for an education persisted, so did the conflict between her mother and herself continue to widen through the years, "culminating in a bitter contest over her mother's right to a patent in fee for her land allotment."[13] According to Picotte, Gertrude Simmons stayed on the reservation the school year of 1888-89 and enrolled in the Santee Normal Training School at the Santee Agency Nebraska.[14] Although her experiences at White's were painful, as indicated in her autobiographical essays, and her estrangement from her mother more pronounced as a result of her education, she left the Santee Agency School and returned in 1891 to graduate from White's school.

Critical to our understanding of Zitkala-Sa's voice, especially since it is grounded in these personal conflicts, is the role of Ellen Simmons' in her daughter's life. Although her legal name, through marriage, was Ellen Simmons, her Dakotah name was <u>Tate I Yohin Win</u> or "Reaches for the Wind." Deborah Welch suggests that she "had failed to provide her daughter with positive incentives to assume either role of wife and mother."[15] I believe Welch uses Gertrude Simmons' letters to Carlos Montezuma as evidence for this conclusion:

> She had resisted the idea of herself in the traditional female role. Her early letters to Montezuma show that she contemplated with distaste the marital duties of house-keeping, hostess, etc. dictated by societal convention at the turn of the century...'the traditional female responsibilities,' she confessed, 'are perfectly appalling to me.'[16]

I don't believe this means Gertrude Simmons rejected the values and behaviors of a traditional Lakota woman. Instead, she may have been rejecting the frequently inferior position of a woman in the patriarchial Anglo world.

In Zitkala-Sa's autobiographical essays, we see her mother as an Indian woman who was close to the land, a woman who understood the interdependency of all living things. This mother understood the importance of respect for traditional values and for spiritual power, and she centered her life on her child, teaching her the ways of her people and the responsibilities of a woman in that traditional landscape. Zitkala-Sa didn't learn these lessons from a book about the Yankton Sioux--she learned them from her mother, the "culture bearer" for her children. But Tate I Yohin Win also taught the child about change and about the impact of the white man and his strange culture. Nevertheless, through her lessons in tradition and the symbolic structures of her culture, she gave her child the confidence and the power to survive, even as she stood in opposition to the Euro-American changes which appeared in her daughter. Consequently, Zitkala-Sa, in the traditional role of a Dakotah woman, carried and transmitted traditional Dakotah values to future generations.

Conflicts for Gertrude Simmons persisted within her educational experience. Sometime between 1895-1898 she attended the Boston Conservatory School of Music where she studied violin and voice. From 1895-1897 she studied at Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana, where she became fluent in English, wrote poetry, published essays in the school paper, participated in debate and competed in oratorical contests,

"winning the second highest award in a statewide contest in 1896." [17] Yet, she was also the victim of overt racial and gender discrimination at the same time. The night of the contest, "an all-male, all-white event,"[18] a white banner displaying her picture--underscored with "Squaw"--hung before the audience. It was the same Euro-American stereotype which had fostered ignorance of women for two centuries and still would stifle their voices in the non-Indian culture for years to come. But it didn't quiet Zitkala-Sa; instead, Dexter Fisher suggests:

> Language became the tool for articulating the tension she experienced throughout her life between her heritage with its imperative of tradition and the inevitable pressure of acculturation.[19]

From 1898-1899, she taught at the Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania where she received much recognition for her musical performances, for her oratory, and for her published essays and poetry in the school paper. In her first year at Carlisle, according to Deborah Welch, Zitkala-Sa began to contact Eastern literary societies indicating she would read and play her violin for them. In the spring at a Washington literary club and before President McKinley, she "demonstrated the heights an Indian could reach when given the opportunity," according to Deborah Welch.[20] These same Euro-American successes also provided the contacts she needed for publication. Her time spent at Carlisle, then, provided preparation and motivation for her subsequent publications in The Atlantic Monthly as well as the publication of Indian Legends in 1902. Through her writing she sought to reach a "broad spectrum of Anglo society, showing them that Indian peoples were human beings, with fears, hopes and dreams for their children, much like themselves."[21] Welch doesn't indicate her source for Zitkala-Sa's motivation here; but if we take it at face value, the comment

indicates that her own experiences and the experiences of her Yankton community in racial and cultural conflict provoked it.

It is difficult to assign an intention to a writer apart from any specific authorial statements which might reveal a particular motivation. When we do, we may find ourselves in a contradictory position such as the one above. These two comments regarding Zitkala-Sa's literary successes and her intention for publishing are based on contradictory assumptions. The first statement regarding "the heights" an Indian might achieve assumes Indians are inferior, especially in terms of literary skills. The second statement which credits Indians for being "much like" the whiteman assumes a natural equality apart from education and/or civilization. I believe this is the assumption on which Zitkala-Sa based her essays and her stories, and the first statement represents an assumption made by the Eastern literary community and/or Deborah Welch. Nevertheless, Zitkala-Sa wore the conflicts between herself and her people throughout her life, and her writing and the responses to her writing demonstrate that fact.

Zitkala-Sa may have been influenced to write and publish through her acquaintence with two previous students from Carlisle from the generation of Sioux who "witnessed the end of their traditional life with their settlement on reservations."[22] Charles A. Eastman, a Santee Sioux and eighteen years her senior, had attended Carlisle under the encouragement of his Christian father. Eastman went on to study medicine and in 1902, with the assistance of his non-Indian wife, published stories of his Indian boyhood. Luther Standing Bear, a Teton Sioux born in 1868, also attended Carlisle upon the advice of his father. In his autobiography, <u>Land of the Spotted Eagle</u>, he talks about his experience at Carlisle and

about "some of the most ordinary customs of the white man that were offensive or deleterious to the Indian."[23] Each of these men was interested in communicating the truth of the Indian to the non-Indian world, without leaving or betraying their own Lakota culture.

Zitkala-Sa was also well acquainted with the founder of the Carlisle School, Richard Henry Pratt. His philosophy easily functions as an authoritative discourse with which her stories wrestle:[24]

> We accept the watch-word, 'There is no good Indian but a dead Indian.' Let us by education and patient effort kill the Indian in him, and save the man.[25]

A former army officer, Pratt intended to educate and "civilize" the Indian by destroying the Indian spirit and by "extinguishing the Indianness of his young charges." [26] Paula Gunn Allen, whose great-grandmother was also educated at Carlisle, equated such schools as "little more than concentration camps for young people," with Carlisle being the "star colonial establishment."[27] According to Fisher, Zitkala-Sa would collect Indian legends to "recreate the spirit of her tribe," and her essays would exhibit both "her rage over mistreatment of Indians and her desire to convince America of the Indian's humanity."[28]

Since Zitkala-Sa voices her anger at the exploitation of her people in her essays and stories, and since her writing reveals a strong awareness of a non-Indian audience, some have assumed she primarily wrote for New England intellectuals. After all, this was the audience that made it possible for her to tell her story. Nevertheless, I believe she also wrote for Indian students at boarding schools such as Carlisle. Evidence of this Indian audience occurs in a letter which Deborah Welch cites from Carlos Montezuma, Zitkala-Sa's fiance. Casting "doubt upon the value of

her work," Montezuma questioned whether the stories she was collecting from the Yankton Reservation would "make any difference in the lives of Indian children?" He also questioned whether missionary teachers would "pass her writings on to their students."[29] Likewise, her brief allusions to Lakota story and tradition, such as "Iktomi legends," serve as evidence for an intended Indian audience. She could expect her native people to fill in the landscape surrounding "Iktomi," whereas an Eastern audience would have had no idea what she meant.

Although her publication in a major literary journal represents a significant achievement for this Yankton Sioux woman, that action also presented difficulties and created more conflicts for her to face as critics read and commented on her work. Three autobiographical essays appeared in The Atlantic Monthly in January, February, and March of 1900. In May of 1900, Outlook published an article entitled "The Representative Indian" by Jessie W. Cook. Sounding like a Jeffersonian philanthropist,[30] Cook began with the question: "when will [the Indian] become Americanized and be of use to the world?" Then she acknowledged Zitkala-Sa's "unusual musical genius" and assumed her readiness to assimilate and become part of the eastern "social, political, or literary life."[31]

A year later in March 1901, her story "Soft-Hearted Sioux" appeared in Harper's Monthly Magazine, and in October of that same year, she published another story, "The Trial Path." "A Warrior's Daughter" was published in Everybody's Magazine in 1902. Although her school paper at the Santee Agency had earlier printed her prize-winning essay with "much pride," they denounced her story, "Soft-Hearted Sioux" as "morally bad," probably because the hero brings misfortune upon himself and his people when he

follows the way of the "soft-hearted" Christ.[32] Those at Carlisle were embarrassed by her purposeful identification as an Indian, especially since Pratt advocated "killing the Indian within." The Red Man and Helper, Carlisle's newspaper, called her writing injurious and harmful, devoid of gratitude for the "kindness on the part of her friends...a case of such pronounced morbidness."[33]

In February 1902, Elizabeth Luther Cary reviewed Zitkala-Sa's autobiographical essays published by the Atlantic Monthly. Cary valued her "contribution to our literature" with her "richness of style...descriptions instinct with passion and significance curbed by a fine restraint."[34] For Cary, the value of Zitkala-Sa's writing lay in form alone rather than theme as communicated through form. No doubt this too posed a conflict for Zitkala-Sa, since she proposed to exhalt the humanity of her people rather than to seek recognition for herself.[35] Nevertheless, Zitkala-Sa's readers couldn't take the opinions expressed in her writing too seriously or else they would have been forced to admit they had committed murder against a whole race--and for the "moral" Euro-American, that would have been unthinkable.

Probably the most controversial of all her essays, "Why I Am a Pagan," appeared in December of 1902, after Elizabeth Cary's review. It seems she was determined to maintain her Indian identity in spite of assimilation pressures. But when the essay appeared again in her collection of American Indian Stories, first published as a collection in 1921, she had changed the title to "The Great Spirit," a final sweetly sentimental paragraph had been added, and one sentence from the first essay is missing in the second: "If this is Paganism, then at present, at least, I am a

Pagan." With these changes, the final tone of the essay changed from anger to reassuring peace. We can only guess why she made this change, but it was likely a suggestion by publishers who were aware of the criticism of her earlier essay. As I read the essay today, I suspect she hadn't changed her belief at all but was willing to appear changed so the rest of her story would be read by a wider Anglo audience. According to Dexter Fisher, Zitkala-Sa continued to live in the midst of the conflict between tradition and acculturation for the rest of her life. She left Carlisle because her employer, Pratt, "was unwilling to continue to employ a teacher who disagreed publically with his acculturation practices."[36]

On May 10, 1902, she married Raymond Bonnin, also a mixed-blood Sioux, and they moved to the Ouray reservation in Utah for fourteen years where he worked for the Bureau of Indian Affairs. There she continued to write and speak on behalf of all Indian people. In 1913, she collaborated on an Indian opera, "Sun Dance," by telling the composer detailed rituals which accompanied the Sun Dance and by playing the music of tribal songs on her violin. In 1916 she was elected secretary of the Society of the American Indian, so the family moved to Washington, D.C. In that position Dexter Fisher says she:

> launched her life's work in Indian reform, lecturing and campaigning across the country for Indian citizenship, employment of Indians in the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and equitable settlement of tribal land claims.

At the same time, from 1918-1919 she served as editor of the Society's magazine, The American Indian Magazine. She founded a Pan-Indian reform group, the National Council of American Indians in 1926. Following the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924, the National Council of American Indians proposed to organize Indian voters towards political action and to become

"a constructive effort to better the Red Race and make its members better citizens of the United States."[37] Gertrude Simmons Bonnin remained its president until she died in 1938.

In spite of the fact that Gertrude Simmons left her home and the reservation willingly, her decision to attend an Eastern boarding school was based on false dreams painted by evangelicals who intended to use this education to "kill the Indian" in her. In a 1990 issue of Montana the Magazine of Western History, Michael Coleman reported on the motivations of young Indian children during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

> Initially, none of these children had much knowledge of or interest in the content of white education. Admittedly, it is unlikely that young white children knew much more; but these Indian children labored under a special burden. Ignorant of English and with emotions and motivations ranging from obedience to fear to curiosity to desires for white goods and an easier life, they set off into an almost totally alien world.[38]

I believe the life and works of Zitkala-Sa' may be read and interpreted in the context of this exile. As a mixed-blood, she couldn't claim a home in the Euro-American tradition, and she couldn't claim a home in the Yankton Sioux tradition. As a child of a 19th century reservation, she couldn't claim the freedom of a traditional Yankton landscape. In this sense even today, many Indians and mixed-bloods are exiles, trapped in an alien landscape. As a child removed from her home and transported to a boarding school for three years, she couldn't claim the presence of her childhood home and family. Finally, as a child returning from boarding school with the whiteman's clothes and the whiteman's words, she was forbidden to claim the only home she had ever known. Yet, her actions throughout her life must have somewhat compensated for her loss. She did

voice her identification as Indian, and even more specifically as Dakota. "For her entire life, Zitkala-Sa had claimed and would continue to assert that she was a Dakota woman, ignoring those who would identify her as a mixed blood."[39] She used her marginal position in both worlds to communicate the culture of her people to the Euro-American world and to younger Indian students who would learn to read her stories long after the old people had died. For her Euro-American audience, she created a literary world out of a remembered Yankton landscape, a world which challenged traditional attitudes and values.

It is unlikely her work was drastically edited by publishing companies. Scholars today generally agree she was the first Indian woman to publish her own stories in English, in her own voice, without the assistance of a collaborator or interpreter. In a response to Pratt's attack after her publications in The Atlantic Monthly, she said: "I won't be another's mouthpiece-I will say just what I think. I fear no man..."[40] The strength of that voice in terms of compelling exaggeration and overstatement may be measured in the comments of contemporary critics who then reacted to her "pronounced morbidness" and by critics today who call her "overly sentimental." Her writing did contribute to the revival of the Dakota oral tradition and language, and she worked throughout her life to establish deserved respect for the "Red Man" throughout America.[41]

For readers today, the life and writings of Zitkala-Sa' may be interpreted as the compensations for and consequences of exile, revealing different voices and different meanings than those understood by her contemporaries or by recent critics. Not intending to establish the idea of exile as the only truth behind her writing, I instead hope to use it to

explore some differences, to question the absences of story and information, to examine her use of language and image, and to make some comparisons and contrasts between Zitkala-Sa's roles as woman and storyteller and those of her feminine ancestors.

Zitkala-Sa articulated a feminine American Indian experience and wrote from past beliefs and through traditional structures. Although she was also a victim of Euro-American forces which would suppress the indigenous feminine voice, she overcame those forces to maintain her role as "culture bearer" for her people. Evidence of her affiliation with traditional values appeared in her obituaries in three major newspapers: The New York Times, The Washington Daily News, and The Washington Star. All three indicated she was the granddaughter of Sitting Bull. Dexter Fisher regards this as evidence of her personality which had become an "admixture of myth and fact," resulting in such an "erroneous" belief. Actually, Gertrude Simmons Bonnin's mother was older than Sitting Bull.[42] But for traditional Lakota people, relationships are defined by behavior, not by biological connections. In her essay, "Impressions," Zitkala-Sa invites "a" grandfather, not "my" grandfather--he was one of several grandfathers she respected and valued. Sitting Bull could have been her grandfather because she respected his wisdom and his willingness to sacrifice his life for the life of his people.

It can't be denied that Lakota tradition was the major source of Zitkala-Sa's power and voice: her mother (Tate I Yohin Win), the traditional strength of women as teachers in the Lakota culture, and her traditional Lakota values. But she was also able to effectively use the dominant culture to communicate with both cultures. I believe she proved

to be a very strong voice both to the Indian world as well as to American literary society, always insisting that "Anglo America must recognize what was good and deserving of preservation in Indian culture,"[43] not so much that Euro-Americans might benefit but so they would cease depriving the Indians of their rightful cultural heritage.

Notes

1. Paula Gunn-Allen in A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff, American Indian Literatures: An Introduction, Bibliographic Review, and Selected Bibliography, (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1990) 93.

2. Deborah Welch, "American Indian Leader: the Story of Gertrude Bonnin," diss., U of Wyoming, 1985 241.

3. Zitkala-Sa' writes in a letter to Montezuma, 1901, as quoted by Dexter Fisher in her Foreword to American Indian Stories, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985) x.

4. Edward Said, "Reflections on Exile," One World, Many Cultures, ed. Stuart Hirschberg, (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1992) 422-427.

5. Agnes M. Picotte, Foreword, Zitkala-Sa, Old Indian Legends, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985) xii.

6. Annual Report of the Department of the Interior, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1876) 444.

7. Herbert T. Hoover, Indians of North America: The Yankton Sioux, (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1988) 41.

8. Department of Interior Reports, (1884) 101.

9. Department of Interior Reports, (1886) 325.

10. Dexter Fisher, "Zitkala Sa: The Evolution of a Writer," American Indian Quarterly 5 Aug (1977): 232.

11. Dexter Fisher, "The Transformation of Tradition: A Study of Zitkala-Sa and Mourning Dove, Two Transitional American Indian Writers," Critical Essays on American Literature, ed. Andrew Wiget, (Boston: Hall, 1985) 204-6.

12. Dexter Fisher, Foreword, American Indian Stories, Zitkala-Sa, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press 1985) x.

13. Fisher xi.

14. It is interesting that Gertrude Simmons went to the boarding school on the Santee Reservation rather than to one of the schools on the Yankton Reservation. The curriculum for the Santee School was much different than the Industrial School at Yankton. Although The Santee school offered industrial training in carpentry, blacksmithing, farming, and the girls were "each one trained in all the lines" of domestic work, the Santee had much more of a

classical or "academic" curriculum: Book-keeping; Botany; Drawing; English composition; Geography; Bible and United States History; Vocal and Instrumental Music; Physiology and hygiene; Physics; and Reading and Writing in English. Report by Alfred L. Riggs, Principal, Report of the Secretary of the Interior, Indian Affairs, (1888), 177-178.

Since Gertrude Simmons had experienced a similar variety of courses at White's school, she was probably interested in pursuing the same curriculum. It is also possible that this move to another reservation school exacerbated her conflict with her family and community.

The Santee Normal School functioned on the philosophy that as much education as possible should be conducted in their own language to avoid "parrot learning" which is "worse than useless." They wanted to train their students to be competent bilingual thinkers and writers, and they believed this approach made students much more successful in their use of the English language. Possibly The Santee Normal School is the place where Gertrude Simmons developed the freedom to think and write for herself.

15. Welch, "American Indian Leader" 65.

16. Welch 232.

17. Picotte, Foreward to Old Indian Legends xiii.

18. Welch 10.

19. Fisher, "Transformation of Tradition" 204.

20. Welch 17.

21. Welch 18.

22. Ruoff, Literature of the American Indian 67.

23. Luther Standing Bear in T.C. McLuhan, Touch the Earth, A Self-Portrait of Indian Existence, (New York: Promontory Press 1971) 103.

24. Mikhail Bakhtin suggests that the relative meaning or significance of our experience as readers or audience depends upon the extent to which we hold or understand the common "authoritative discourses" or underlying assumptions about life which inform the creator or speaker in a text.
Mikhail Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," The Critical Tradition: Classic Texts and Contemporary Trends, ed. David H. Richter, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989) 780-790.

25. Merrill Edwards Gates, LL.D., President of Rutgers College included this quote in his article, "Land and Laws as Agents in Educating the Indian." He prefaced the quote with, "the noblest rejoinder I have heard come recently from the staunch hero who is the head of the Carlisle School for the Indians, Captain Pratt." Gates article was published in the 1885 Annual Report of the Department of the Interior Vol 1, 775.

26. Welch 16.

27. Allen, Spider Woman's Granddaughters 15.

28. Fisher, "Transformation of Tradition" 205.

29. Welch, diss. 38.

30. In Seeds of Extinction, Jeffersonian Philanthropy and the American Indian, Bernard W. Sheehan discusses the Jeffersonian philosophy: All humans are of equal origin, but all humans are also in a state of becoming. If the natives were equal physically, then they could become morally and culturally equal also. The Euro-Americans could help the natives achieve the superior development of whites as they "made over the Indian in the image of the white man." Once they accomplished this task, they believed the Indian would become incorporated into the Euro-American society. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1974) 142.

31. For a further explication of Cook's comments about Zitkala-Sa, refer to Appendix II.

32. Picotte xiii.

33. Fisher, "Zitkala-Sa: The Evolution of a Writer" 230.

34. Elizabeth Luther Cary, rev. "Impressions of an Indian Childhood," "The School Days of an Indian Girl," and "An Indian Teacher Among Indians," Zitkala-Sa, in "Recent Writings by American Indians," The Book Buyer: A Monthly Review of American Literature 24 Feb (1902):23-25.

35. For a further explication of Cary's review, please refer to Appendix III.

36. Welch 25.

37. Hazel W. Hertzberg, The Search for an American Indian Identity, Modern Pan-Indian Movements, (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1971) 151.

38. "Zitkala-Sa and Eastman were participants in an immensely ambitious educational crusade that drew the United States government and Christian missionary societies into partnership to

bring white American education to Indian children. By the early twentieth century, over twenty thousand young Indians were enrolled in government day schools, in on-reservation and off-reservation boarding schools and in missionary schools. Both secular and religions educators shared the conviction that Indian people were doomed to extinction unless they rejected their 'savage' ways of life and adapted to the dominant, white culture. With absolute conviction, these religious and government schools set out to save the Indians from themselves." Michael C. Coleman, a visiting professor in American Studies at Miami University of Ohio in 1988-1989, "Motivations of Indian Children at Missionary and U.S. Government Schools," Montana The Magazine of Western History, Winter (1990) 31-33.

39. Welch 61.

40. Welch 27.

41. In her introduction to Spider Woman's Grandaughters, Paula Gunn Allen traces the 19th-century decline of Native territorial and cultural integrity. However, she admits the "situation improved" when Native peoples themselves worked on solving the problems. Allen suggests that Zitkala-Sa prodded the General Federation of women's Clubs "to look for ways to alleviate the native people's situation." Consequently, the journalist Helen Hunt Jackson wrote A Century of Dishonor which was followed by governmental investigations, the Merriam Survey, and the Indian Reorganization Act.

42. Dexter Fisher, "Zitkala Sa: The Evolution of a Writer" 236-238.

43. Welch 33.

CHAPTER V

"Impressions of an Indian Childhood"

> ...she patted my head and said, "Now let me see how fast you can run today." Whereupon, I tore away at my highest possible speed, with my long black hair blowing in the breeze.
>
> Zitkala-Sa [1]

From the very beginning of "Impressions of an Indian Childhood," through her word and presence, Tate I Yohin Win sends her power and the power of her feminine Dakotah ancestors to her daughter, Zitkala-Sa. It is the power manifested in her name and in the feminine Wind, Tate, the extraordinary and no less powerful Lakota force which moves in connection with the masculine Sky, Skan. It moves in their "dwelling," when "cool morning breezes" sweep from the prairie. With her hair "blowing in the breeze," the child physically knows this power that whispers to clouds and roars around mountain tops. The child also knows this power in her spirit when she runs "free as the wind...no less spirited than a bounding deer." With pride, her mother watches her daughter's "wild freedom and overflowing spirits." In Zitkala-Sa's recollection and recording of this image, she acknowledges her mother's personification of this most powerful force, and she affirms the continuity between the Wind, her mother and herself.

In her second essay "The School Days of an Indian Girl," Zitkala-Sa again admits this power when she defines her Indian nature. It is "the moaning wind" with power to stir memories--memories of flowers and fruit, of soft laps and bent grandfathers, memories of scissors and bells and hunger and shame. Later, in her third essay "An Indian Teacher Among Indians," she returns to the reservation to see her mother and her brother. Just as she "alights from the iron horse," she's struck by a

"strong hot wind...determined to blow [her] hat off, and return [her] to olden days." This recurring image of personified Wind and its accompanying power to move spirit and memory appears throughout Zitkala-Sa's early writing. Likewise, its absence from the Eastern landscape demonstrates the significant loss of power she felt when separated from her mother and her home: "I was as frightened and bewildered as the captured young of a wild creature"(45).

This final metaphor from Zitkala-Sa's "Impressions of an Indian Childhood" conveys the captivity theme which is present in all her published works. At the very beginning, delightful images of an Indian childhood in the "easy, natural flow of life" charm our spirits. However, when we read her subsequent "impressions" against the late nineteenth-century reservation landscape, we discover that the stories chronicle a very personal and most devastating separation and loss--a loss of home, of native place, of roots. Nevertheless, the stories themselves represent survival and the will to prevail in spite of loss. With a determination to persuade New England society of the Indian's humanity, Zitkala-Sa, the storyteller, communicates several levels of meaning as she interprets her past, and the past of her people, to establish a personal and tribal identity.

First published in the Atlantic Monthly Magazine, January 1900, the autobiographical essay, "Impressions of an Indian Childhood," was re-published without change in her 1921 collection, American Indian Stories.[2] Although the seven episodes appear to be in sequential order, and the themes and settings are related, nearly every episode evinces jarring shifts in tone from sweet to bitter to tragic. Seemingly incompatible

voices and images passionately emerge from five different contexts which influenced Zitkala-Sa: the intimate family life of her childhood, late nineteenth-century Yankton Reservation experiences, Lakota history and traditional culture, classical and Judeo-Christian literature, and the language of Eastern America's literary society. Nevertheless, Zitkala-Sa has maneuvered and shaped these various contexts into a pattern and into a coherent story.

The language itself poses a most significant problem for readers today because it moves from stiffly formal Euro-American and Christian rhetoric, through sentimental imagery, to the sounds and images of native experience. The child is "greatly vexed," and she expresses "impudence" and "insipid hospitality." This vocabulary impressed Zitkala-Sa's contemporary critics who admired her proficiency with the English language. According to Dexter Fisher, she had "fascinated the eastern literary world" because she was a "savage" who had not only learned to read and write in English but had published as well.[3] However, the formal and often archaic vocabulary and sentence structure doesn't necessarily mean Zitkala-Sa had completely moved from her native voice into the alien Eastern literary voice. Her correct use of the language also would have impressed an "educated" Indian audience from various tribal traditions. Brian Swann refers to John Stands in Timber (Cheyenne) who describes the sacredness of the word to the Cheyenne people.

> Someone who used language without "absolute correctness," he says, was "relegated to an outcast in the tribe."[4]

Elizabeth Luther Cary cites Francis La Flesche, a member of the Omaha tribe and a contemporary of Zitkala-Sa:

> The Omaha child was also strictly trained in the grammatical use of his native tongue. No slip was allowed to pass uncorrected, and children soon spoke as accurately as their elders. There was nothing corresponding to slang, to localisms, or to profanity.[5]

Together with this formal rhetoric, Zitkala-Sa's use of emotional imagery creates impressions of moving and violent drama. The child embraces life with bounding health when she "runs...skips...jumps...and finds joyous relief in running loose." And when she fears her mother might not approve of her going East to boarding school, her "eyes blur with tears," while she struggles to "choke them back." These are the sentimental and sweet, the self-centered impressions which the writer remembers and relates. But in bitter-angry tones, Zitkala-Sa remembers her impressions of her mother's grief-torn voice, telling the story of the fraudaulent "paleface" who drove them "like a herd of buffalo"--telling the story of an older daughter's death:

> With every step, your sister, who was not as large as you are now, shrieked with the painful jar until she was hoarse with crying. She grew more and more feverish. Her little hands and cheeks were burning hot. Her little lips were parched and dry, but she would not drink the water I gave her. Then I discovered that her throat was swollen and red...At last when we reached this western country, on the first weary night your sister died.(10)

Although critics have called this strongly sentimental, the reader cannot escape the anguish here. No doubt Zitkala-Sa struggled over a way to revive and transmit the near-smothered voices of a suffering people. But these "told-on-the-page" narratives succeed, and the reader must witness the striking and violent drama of the American Indian's captivity and disintegration.

Strongly contrasting with this harsh reservation imagery is the language produced from Zitkala-Sa's ancestral Dakotah landscape. Like water

rippling through rough-piled rocks, parallel consonants, vowels, and phrases flow from the lyrical native voice. "My mother stooped, and stretching her left hand on the level with my eyes, she placed her other arm about me"(9). Through the repetition of "s" and "l" sounds, the word flows as her mother moves, releasing feminine energy and power through her eyes and hands. Later, the child moves with the same fluid power: "Standing straight and still, I began to glide after it, putting out one foot cautiously"(23). The rhythm created in these lines draws the reader into the sun's warmth when "...the full face of the sun appeared above the eastern horizon..." Parallel participles communicate the urgent determination in the child's voice as she runs after her shadow, "faster and faster, setting [her] teeth and clenching [her] fist"(23). Although Zitkala-Sa may have been imitating other Euro-American writers of the time, the lyrical quality strongly represents the fluidity of her native language.

Some of the more stereotypical Indian imagery is probably the "exotic" glossing of an enthusiastic editor, especially "wigwam" (an Algonquin word) and "whooped" and "creeping," as well as the more primitive name for the white man, "paleface." But much of it, especially the animal imagery, may be traced to Zitkala-Sa's Yankton background. The child is "no less spirited than a bounding deer," and she "ensnares a sunny hour;" the people are "driven like a herd of buffalo," and she hears the "howling of wolves and the hooting of an owl." Her rock-candy forms a "lump the size of a small bird's egg," and at the end of the essay, the child feels like the "captured young of a wild creature."

Zitkala-Sa learned her English in a Quaker boarding school, where Christianity and Euro-American civilization and culture were taught simultaneously. But when she wrote for The Atlantic Monthly, she was writing primarily for a secular literary audience. Nevertheless, the influence of Puritan rhetoric and its symbols pervades her writing, just as it does the writing of her nineteenth-century contemporaries. The child suffers "many trials" in her beadwork, judges and "punishes" herself when she misbehaves, and serves "unleavened bread" to her guest. Her mother "worships" the uncle's memory, and smoke rises "heavenward." When her mother cautions her not to eat from the plum bush, the child eyes the "forbidden fruit" and walks carefully on the "sacred ground."

To her Eastern audience, this rhetoric may have served to reinforce their own Puritan beliefs, and they could have assumed she had moved from her "Pagan" belief system to Christianity. However, the Judeo-Christian rhetoric is also the vehicle for her communication of traditional Dakotah values. Zitkala-Sa's native value of "fortitude," a subtle and quiet bravery, is manifested in her "many trials" at beadwork, and the native value of appropriate behavior is reinforced when the child is willing to "punish" herself. Since a Lakota woman's most valued relative was her brother, the mother's "worship" of her warrior brother reveals that value. The importance of elders and the child's obligation to feed them is raised to the level of the sacred in the Christian sense when she feeds her grandfather "unleavened bread," the bread Christ gave his disciples at the Last Supper.

This juxtaposition of Judeo-Christian allusions with Yankton/Dakotah imagery is especially evident in two episodes, "The Dead Man's Plum Bush"

and "The Big Red Apples." The allusion to "forbidden fruit" demonstrates the sacred value of the plum bush, with roots "wrapped around an Indian's skeleton," and the child's recollection of her cousin's tempting story about boarding school in the East reads like a recreation of the account of Eve's Fall in Genesis.

> Judewin had told me of the great tree where grew red, red apples; and how we could reach out our hands and pick all the red apples we could eat. I had never seen apple trees. I had never tasted more than a dozen red apples in my life; and when I heard of the orchards of the East, I was eager to roam among them. (42)

On the surface, the analogy works as chastisement for the child's following "temptation" to leave her mother and her home. An Eastern audience steeped in the Puritan rhetoric would have understood and accepted the comparison. The audience also would have admired an Indian writer's acceptance of this moral discipline as proof of her progress toward "civilization," and they would have been impressed that she knew her Bible so well. But later in this chapter I will examine another interpretation which reveals the underlying irony within Zitkala-Sa's use of this rhetoric.

Other examples of Euro-American rhetoric in Zitkala-Sa's writing probably appealed to her Eastern audience's established belief systems about the Indian, and about themselves and their world. But at times this rhetoric appears to weaken the power of her native voice when it works to contradict some Dakota practices and beliefs. Although Indians traditionally may not have relegated meal times to specific hours or occasions, the mother and her child eat the "civilized way"--breakfast, lunch and supper, while the native "morning, noon, and evening" disappears after the first episode. The traditional stories told around the campfire

are "legends" and "tales" which might be more understandable to Euro-Americans; however, they also carry the connotation of fiction or fantasy, something not real, and that would contradict the traditional Lakota belief in their absolute truth. Zitkala-Sa's Euro-American rhetoric also raises Indian practices above the stereotypically "primitive" level. Beadwork is regarded as "art," and the child "designs" and uses a "palatte" so the work will appear more significant than "craft." Eagle plumes are called "trophies" which would communicate their value as more than simple decoration. And the mother raises corn which grows "abundantly." Eastern readers would have been impressed that an Indian had not only learned to farm but had learned to farm so well.

The native voice also appears weakened as traditional and classical Euro-American rhetoric is further used to name and describe human beings as well as spiritual forces. The warrior exhibits "valor" and "gallantry" after the European idea of chivalry, and the children are likened to "sportive nymphs" on the Dakota landscape, with "locks," or ringlets, rather than the straight hair of the Indian. The traditional practice of calling all same-generation relatives by "father" or "mother" is replaced with "uncle" and "aunt." The elders are called "old folks," an image which carries cozy connotations of rural farmlife, but it lacks the respect that a traditional Lakota would have felt towards an elder. Indian girls behave "coquettishly," with teasing shyness towards men. However, the word generally refers to a sophisticated young woman. The image either poses a ridiculous contrast to the more reserved behavior of native women OR it raises the level of Indian women from primitives to Euro-American socialites.

Not only is Euro-American rhetoric used to describe supernatural forces, but Wakan Tanka and other terms representing Lakota power have been replaced with the Euro-American "Great Spirit." The child fears the judgment of the "Great Spirit," and the mother accuses the "Great Spirit" of forgetting their family when a child dies. William K. Powers refers to Riggs who in 1869 defined the Lakota understanding of "Great Spirit."

> Great Spirit is a god named last and least among their divinities. In no sense is he held in high reverence, no worship is offered to him. He is the white man's god, and they find no better way to name him.[6]

Powers suggests the cosmological understanding moves from Judeo-Christian to Lakota and then back again. In the process, the Lakota and even the Christian belief system is reinvented or changed to a certain extent. Although the Great Spirit isn't designated as masculine, Zitkala-Sa's mother's relationship with this power appears more like the Judeo-Christian's experience with a god rather than the Lakota's personification of power. However, there is another interpretation which would follow Riggs' definition. For the most part, her mother only speaks about the "Great Spirit" with reference to whites and to missionaries. In her third essay, Zitkala-Sa returns home to the reservation. There she sees her mother, now carrying the Bible translated in Dakotah and praying for the "Great Spirit to avenge" their wrongs. When her daughter cries, "The Great Spirit does not care if we live or die! Let us not look for good or justice," she strokes her daughter's head, "as she used to do," and says: "There is Taku Iyotan Wasaka to which I pray."

Finally, the Euro-American rhetoric of freedom appears throughout the essay. It would have appealed to an Eastern literary audience, just as it appeals to readers today. We can feel the wind in our hair as the child

runs across the open prairie, with her "long black hair blowing in the breeze." The ideology of freedom is an important--positive--concept, especially for Americans who are always moving toward that perfect state. But the images of wind, air, breeze and open air represent an interesting paradox as well as tragic loss for the Indian raised on the reservation. When read in the context of the Yanktons' reservation experience, "freedom" carries strong negative connotations. We can't help but see flashes of contrasting images where children sit confined in hard schoolroom desks, images where cold, damp sod houses trap the fetid air, and images where children die of tuberculosis and measles. The fact that Zitkala-Sa uses the word "freedom" at all is significant, since pre-contact Indians would not have known the word. Freedom <u>was</u> their experience, not something they would have to define as separate from their present condition. Zitkala-Sa wrote her essays to accommodate her Anglo audience who would have made connections between what they knew from their Euro-American and Puritan rhetorical experience and what they read in these stories from a foreign landscape. On the other hand, it is also true that something of the native landscape has been lost as a consequence of her accommodation to the that audience.

The juxtaposition of various contexts appears in the first episode of "Impressions of an Indian Childhood." Zitkala-Sa introduces the mother-daughter relationship theme, as a child and her Indian mother walk down a winding footpath to draw water from the Missouri River. With this initial image of Zitkala-Sa's home, "a wigwam of weather-stained canvas," some confusion in setting appears. From the Eastern American tribes, an Algonquin "wigwam" stands on the central American prairie near the

Missouri River. I suspect this is the voice of an Atlantic Monthly editor who knew an Eastern literary audience would have been more familiar with wigwams than lodges or homes. "Wigwam" reappears throughout the essay, but the child's mother uses "tepee" when she talks to her daughter. Perhaps the editor missed it, or perhaps he thought the variation interesting. The "weather-stained canvas" image places the story in the post-contact or nineteenth-century reservation landscape.[7] The child is happy to stop her play and join her mother on these trips to the river, but much tribal grief is buried in the "muddy" Missouri, since the reservation system had prevented the Indians from moving to fresh sources of water.

On one level of interpretation, "Impressions of an Indian Childhood" is not so much nostalgic reminiscence, which the title implies. It is an apology to her mother, Tate I Yohin Win, and it is a testimonial to her mother's power and strength and to their early intimate relationship. In the beginning, the child "clung" to her mother's hand, read sadness in her mother's lips which were "compressed into hard and bitter lines," and "pillowed" and "nestled into" her mother's lap. She was brave when her mother was "near by," but when "by herself," she would sit in a "fearful mood." However, as an adult, Zitkala-Sa practiced the bravery of her mother and learned how to confront her fears. According to Deborah Welch, Zitkala-Sa refused to be victimized: "I shall not stay away from cowardly fears."[8]

With gentle voice and touch, the mother teaches her "little daughter" the practical skills of a traditional Dakota woman, as well as the wisdom for living at peace with others. In detail, Zitkala-Sa relates her mother's lessons in the importance of close observation:

> Frequently she asked, "What were they doing when you entered their tepee?" This taught me to remember all I saw at a single glance. Often I told my mother my impressions without being questioned. (14)

The child must learn to watch and listen in order to learn: "I ate my supper in quiet, listening patiently to the talk of the old people." Certainly these impressions and memories, captured when she was young, made it possible for her to write as an adult and to survive her alien landscape. These lessons gave her the power to understand her circumstances and the people who would oppress her.

From her mother the child learns the value of hospitality, the importance of sharing, and the obligation to feed friends and strangers, invited and uninvited alike. "Strangers were sure of welcome in our lodge." The child so strongly feels her obligation that when the old grandfather visits and the child is alone, she goes through the motions to give him coffee, even though she knows the fire is dead and the grounds old. Her mother sends her off to invite elderly neighbors to eat with them, and later she prepares food for the ill mother-in-law of a neighbor. The Dakotah mother also teaches her child the importance of respecting the rights of others. Most importantly, she should never intrude herself:

> My mother used to say to me, as I was almost bounding away for the old people: "Wait a moment before you invite any one. If other plans are being discussed, do not interfere, but go elsewhere." (13)

Likewise, the mother practices that value herself. She leaves her daughter to her "own taste" and treats her as a "dignified little individual" as long as she is on her good behavior. She choses not to impose her will on her child but instead allows her go to the "land of the big apples" in the East. To the Dakotah, children are wakan, sacred, and

the old grandfather demonstrates that traditional respect for the child when she serves him muddy coffee. Neither he nor her mother would have criticized the child's coffee. Instead, they "treated [her] best judgment, poor as it was, with the utmost respect"(28). So strong is this respect that the child defines her mother as one whose "pride" is in her children rather than herself and her own personal accomplishments. The traditional values reflected in these stories--the importance of learning by imitation, of a child's right to learn on her own, and of the natural respect elders have for children--later contrast sharply with Zitkala-Sa's boarding school experiences where the Indian children have no voice.

In this first essay, the mother teaches her daughter to understand the experience of others, both human and non-human, before passing judgment or living in fear. When the child is frightened of Wiyaka-Napbina, Wearer of a Feather Necklace, her mother tells her there is a reason for his behavior which he really can't help since "he was overtaken by a malicious spirit." When the child wants to catch a ground squirrel that comes to eat dried corn because she wants to "rub his pretty fur back," her mother says he would be "frightened" and would bite. So the child decides to share the corn and keep it between herself and the squirrel. He takes what he needs, and she watches the rest for her mother. Several Dakotah values surface in these stories. Selfless hospitality towards others, even strangers, is very important. The child learns the squirrel's need to prepare for winter is just as valid as the same human need; he is "a little stranger," and the child learns to respect him as a guest. Also, the Indian is presented as industrious and self-sufficient, contrary to

the traditional stereotype which categorized Zitkala-Sa's people as lazy and dependent.

But the mother also warns her child of dangers she must respect and fear, such as the poison in porcupine quills and in "white man's lies:" "Their words are sweet, but, my child, their deeds are bitter" (40-41). The early intimacy between this mother and her child dramatically contrasts with the ultimate separation which results when the child ignores her mother's warning and leaves for boarding school. In the beginning, they are connected by a common language, "my mother's native tongue," and by the power in the Wind. The child sits close, never leaving her mother's side "without first asking her consent." But the temptation of an education in the East results in the child's refusal to "hearken" to her "mother's voice" which accuses the child of "wishing to leave." The mother concedes because she appears to realize the importance of an education for the future when "there will be fewer real Dakotas, and many more palefaces." Still the separation is devastating. In contrast with her initial sensitivity to her mother's tears at the beginning of the story, the child sees no sign of grief and no tears on the mother's face. As the wagon pulls away, the child stands separated from the "lonely figure" of her mother, feels her own loneliness, and suddenly loses strength and voice:

> I felt suddenly weak, as if I might fall limp to the ground. I was in the hands of strangers whom my mother did not fully trust. I no longer felt free to be myself, or to voice my own feelings. (45)

And instead of "pillowing" her head in her mother's lap, she buries her face in her "best thick blanket." It is, for the moment, her only remaining contact with a lost landscape.

When this last episode is read in the context of traditional Lakota values and practices, the child's loss--and the mother's loss as well--is especially devastating. Traditionally, the mother had full responsibility for children until they reached puberty, and this child is not yet eight years old. As the "carrier of culture," the mother has given her child instruction in the Dakota way, expecting to see that child grow up to transmit that same culture to her children. She has, no doubt, taught her the same values as Ella Deloria expressed years later:

> "The ultimate aim of Dakota life, stripped of accessories, was quite simple: One must obey kinship rules; one must be a good relative. No Dakota who has participated in that life will dispute that. In the last analysis every other consideration was secondary--property, personal ambition, glory, good times, life itself."[9]

"Impressions of an Indian Childhood" may be read as an expression of guilt. The child has disobeyed kinship rules, and that disobedience and accompanying ambition has resulted in her separation from her mother. But in the end, the child is even more the victim. She is passive, not active, when this "first step" she takes parts her from her mother. Now "captured," she clings no longer to her mother but to a "bare wall...frightened and bewildered"(45), an exile on her way to a foreign landscape.

On another level of interpretation, the pre-European Dakota landscape is another theme in this essay, and the story reveals some details of that traditional Dakota culture. Readers see and hear the crowds of "bent old grandmothers," "young braves," toothless warriors," and "young mothers" who are "half pulling" their children as they gather in circles to listen to stories and to honor warriors. Zitkala-Sa describes her uncle, "one of the nation's bravest warriors." He had demonstrated "proud feats of

valor... deeds of gallantry... kindness." He was an "ideal to women" and "everyone loved him." When such a warrior would return from battle, "near relatives" of the "honored one" would give a public feast, young Indian women would "invite some older relative to escort them," and the men would "paint faces" and dress up with eagle plumes and bear "broad white bosoms of elk's teeth." Formal Indian names such as Haraka Wamdi, Chanyu, Warca-Ziwin, and Judewin, are used in the story, and only one is defined in English; the more traditional forms of direct address in kinship terms rather than "given" names are also used: "my little daughter," grandfather, aunt, uncle, "little granddaughter." "It was an old grandfather" implies the elder was one of several "near relatives" rather than her own biological grandfather.

The place of story in that traditional Dakota landscape is also communicated in "Impressions of an Indian Childhood." "Legends" are told by grandfathers and grandmothers around the nighttime fires "when the sun [hangs] low in the west." While telling the stories, the grandfather gestures, and the old women participate by making "funny remarks" and laughing, and children practice responses such as "Han Han," (yes, yes) when the speaker pauses to breathe. The stories represent the experience and will of the entire group, the collective experience of the community, rather than the experience of one individual. "Our parents were led to say only those things that were in common favor"(22). As the stories are told, the child is held in the womb of her community, and she learns to value this respectful and sharing relationship in deed and word. The "Dead Man's Plum Bush" exemplifies the kind of story which might be told to help children understand certain beliefs, practices or rules. The

mother tells her child that a brave was buried with plum seeds in his hand because he loved to play the "game of striped plum seeds." From those seeds "sprang up this little bush," and consequently the plums from that particular bush are sacred and must not be eaten. Lakotas believe that once people have experienced a story, it becomes part their own experience, and this happens to the child who goes to sleep over her legends.

Zitkala-Sa probably learned these traditions as a child, and so the story frequently focuses on the young girl who is living and practicing the old ways. She is dressed in a "brown buckskin" and moccasins until she puts on a "dress" when she prepares to leave for boarding school. She makes dolls out of ears of corn, uses "sinew" for threading the beadwork, dries meat and wild cherries, berries, and plums, and digs "sweet roots, a stalky plant with yellow blossoms." The child practices proper Dakota behavior by halting "shyly at the entrances" to their neighbor's tepees, by sitting on her feet--"the proper sitting position for a girl," and by respecting instruction, demands, or discipline from all elders, not just from family members. When she fails to follow the traditionally modest behavior, she is disciplined with "shame" in the traditional way:

> How humiliated I was when some boldness of mine drew forth a rebuke from her!

When she plays with her friends, the child imitates her mother, the way she sits, gives gifts, and the way she responds to stories:

> We used to exchange our necklaces, beaded belts, and sometimes even our moccasins. We pretended to offer them as gifts to one another.(21)

Underneath the practices of "old ways" which the story presents lies the traditional Lakota world view which is integral to Zitkala-Sa's

"childhood impressions." There is the belief that power exists within symbols of color and shape and in the natural world. The child sees a woman whose "magic power lay hidden behind the marks upon her face," and with awe--in respect of their power--the child watches the "smoking of unknown fires." Human beings are capable of incorporating power or "spirit." This spirit is power within, and the human being and the power can become one in action. Her mother has given her the sacred power of the Wind; and the child runs across the prairie, feeling as if she "were the activity," her hands and feet "only experiments" for her spirit to work upon. Even plants and the dead have voices which must be respected. When her mother warns her to "never pluck a single plum from this bush, my child, for its roots are wrapped around an Indian's skeleton," the child listens for the "strange whistle of departed spirits (33)." She is moved by the power of elements in nature such as the "shifting of a cloud shadow in the landscape" which can change the "impulses" of children. This is the power she feels she has lost when she boards the "iron horse" for the East.

On still another level, many of the overt statements in the "Impressions of an Indian Childhood" may be interpreted as comments about tribal loss of land, relatives, freedom, and happiness due to the impact of the white man and the reservation system. The child expresses her hatred for the "paleface that makes my mother cry." It is important to note that the situation which may have caused those tears must have been especially traumatic since such expressions of emotion were traditionally discouraged. So the child not only wants to protect her mother from

grief; she also wants to protect her from embarrassment within the community.

Her mother communicates her belief that they have lost the child's father, uncle and sister as a consequence of the "heartless paleface." He has "forced" them away and "stolen" the land they loved, "driven [them] hither" to remain bound within the reservation confines, and has brought the sickness which kills. The mother's story about being "driven like a herd of buffalo"(10) need not be interpreted only as her personal experience with removal. It also can represent the historical experience of the entire tribe. When the child offers to take over the burden of carrying water, her mother responds with: "if the paleface does not take away from us the river we drink"(9). Here the tone shifts from sweetness to near sarcasm, implying the magnitude of loss they have already experienced. By the time Zitkala-Sa wrote these stories, the U.S. Government had taken the Yanktons' hunting land and the buffalo, and agents had forced the people to live in sod houses where tuberculosis and measles thrived, killing hundreds of children and the elderly.

Not only have Indian people lost land, relatives, and freedom, but they have also lost an element of their personal identity as a consequence of marriages between whites and Indians. Although the essays never make reference to a non-Indian father, I believe the identity issue is treated symbolically in the episode about "shadows in the landscape." The child leaves behind the great shadows of clouds and begins to chase her own shadow. But it "slips away... always a step beyond" and moves whenever she moves. She finally "dares it to the utmost" and sits on a hillside rock where her shadow follows to sit beside her. Her friends don't

understand the experience, just as Zitkala-Sa's brother and sister-in-law didn't understand her desire to keep her Dakota identity even as she pursued a Euro-American education. Biographers have suggested she was never able to "catch" her heritage and claim it for her own since it was neither Indian nor Euro-American. Deborah Welch believes Zitkala-Sa was "at home in neither Anglo or Indian society."[10] But the "rock imbedded in the hillside" may provide the clue to another interpretation. The rock is power, Inyan, one of the four, animate forces in the universe controlled by wakan, the "incomprehensible" of the Lakota people. Even in the midst of conflict, the "rock" provides the child with security and power to "chase [her] shadow" which "sits beside" her as she rests on the rock.

Contrasts throughout the essay also reinforce the losses which Zitkala-Sa's Yankton people have suffered. We see a child as she moves in joy and freedom across the prairie, but her mother's tears and overt expressions of grief turn the tone to bitter-sadness. The child and her mother have enough corn to share, but the black matted hair and "long lean arms" of Wiyaka-Napbina who is driven by "extreme hunger" call up images of reservation Indians who starve when drought strikes and rations are withheld. The "bronzed Dakota" warriors--"real" men--are admired by the entire community for their valor, gallantry and kindness, but the "bad paleface" missionaries tear young children from their mothers. Contrasts in the landscape also reveal suffering and loss. Instead of the traditional buffalo-skin, the white-man's canvas covers the tepee, which also bears the "weather-stained" marks of suffering. When the daughter returns after years of schooling and teaching in the East, even the "well-

ventilated wigwam" has been replaced with the sod-damp home of "clumsy logs."

The most significant contrast in this essay, though, between the Indian and the Euro-American tradition and experience is communicated through the pervasive ironic voice. This Indian mother teaches her child--"free as the wind"--to never intrude herself upon others. Yet visions of the American Indian's territorial and cultural losses--the consequence of "palefaces" encroachment--surround and clash against the literal teaching. With bayonets and cannons, "palefaces" purge the American landscape of native animals and peoples to bring wagons and cattle, fences and plows, Bibles and crucifixes, and books that teach the natives what to value. Ironically, Dakota selflessness and respect for others as evidenced here may be compared with the Euro-American belief that individuals' expressions of freedom should never infringe on others' equal right to express and to act out their freedom. Ideally, this is what it means to be "civilized" in the Lakota world as well as in the Euro-American world. However, the Indian child's practice of respect for the rights of others stands in bold opposition to visions of many selfish Euro-Americans as they practiced expansionism and cultural domination. In one scene, the mother directs her child to "go elsewhere" rather than interfere with or hinder the elders' other plans. Nevertheless, many Indian people, and particularly Zitkala-Sa, witnessed the Euro-Americans both interferring and hindering the Indians' plans for themselves.

Irony is also communicated in Zitkala-Sa's essays if we regard them as a written form of the traditional Dakota stories, Ohunkakan. More specifically, the essay, "Impressions of an Indian Childhood," may be read

as a contemporary Iktomi story. Ella Deloria's definitions of this trickster in Dakota mythology are especially useful since she was born in the same Yankton tradition as Zitkala-Sa. Appearing in various human disguises, Iktomi or Ikto is the trickster, the poser, the pretender, with no conception of sincerity. According to Deloria, he is always immoral using manipulation to get what he wants; however, the traditional Iktomi "wills nothing consciously." Instead, he is impulsive, thoughtless, without heart, and his behavior represents a wide range of "possible" human behaviors.[11] In some stories, Iktomi fails when he tries to play the role of an extra-ordinary human; and when he becomes overly enthusiastic, he is apt to bring ridicule on himself. Iktomi is spare of speech, unable to use the more elaborate language of ordinary men. Within the traditional Lakota community, Iktomi stories served a very important function. Although they were frequently humorous, providing good entertainment for long winter nights, Iktomi stories also warned the listeners of possible deceit and fraud, to protect them from being made fools by someone "posing as a very agreeable fellow, simply to get what he wants." Consequently, in the oral tradition, stories were accompanied by asides about the stupidity of those who mindlessly followed the trickster, and children learned to be watchful and wary whenever an elder would say, "He is playing Iktomi."[12]

With the vision of an adult looking back on her childhood, Zitkala-Sa could no doubt see the role Iktomi had played in her life's story. In the essay, "Impressions of an Indian Childhood," Iktomi is the "paleface...the heartless sham...who has defrauded" them of their land and "forced" them away. From the very beginning episode, the mother warns her daughter

about the "white man's lies," but still the child fails to recognize him when he comes in missionary disguise. Within the essay, these warnings function as foreshadowings of the final episode where the child follows the missionaries and leaves her mother and her home to become the "captured young of a wild creature."

Throughout the story, missionaries are associated with deceit, and just like Iktomi, they disturb the Lakota world order which is based on interdependence and trust. Once missionaries gave the child:

> "a little bag of marbles...all sizes and colors. Among them were some of colored glass."(37)

Intrigued with the "same colors of the rainbow" in the river's "crystal ice," she tried to pick the colors with her fingers. But the "stinging cold" hurt, and she had to bite her fingers "to keep from crying." The adult narrator remembers that story and closes with serious irony:

> From that day on, for many a moon, I believed that glass marbles had river ice inside of them.(38)

The beauty in marbles is deceiving just as the overt generosity of the missionaries masks their intention to remove and change Indian children forever.

In the episode "The Big Red Apples," missionaries from the East arrive wearing big hats and carrying "large hearts, they said." Again the child's mother warns: "they have come to take away Indian boys and girls to the East." Although the inclusion of "they said" indicates the adult narrator disbelieves the "large hearts," the child trusts them and fails to heed her mother's warning. Consequently, she follows the temptation of "the big red apples." Here, Zitkala-Sa weaves together her Lakota story tradition and the Judeo-Christian tradition and rhetoric to create

striking irony. In the Lakota tradition, "they said" was included in the telling to indicate the story represented the vision of a whole people and their traditions, not the singular "I." In this text--this story--we can interpret the inclusion of this phrase as an accusation of all missionaries. Not only does the adult narrator disbelieve these particular missionaries, but their deceitful voices represent the collective voice of the whole community of missionaries.

Like the serpent in the Genesis account of the Fall, missionaries manipulate their victims into leaving parents and friends for boarding school in the East.

> But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. Genesis 3:3-5.[13]

Her friend Judewin becomes the tempters' accomplice when she tells about the "great tree where grew red, red apples...all the red apples we could eat;" and through the interpreter, missionaries promise "a ride on the iron horse." Like Eve, the child's "hope of going to a Wonderland prevents her from recognizing the deceit:

> And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. Genesis 3:6-7

Adam and Eve knew their sin and tried to hide themselves "from the presence of the Lord God," and the child, with "vague misgiving," feels the "sense of regret" and weakness. Adam and Eve--and also this child--experience the consequences of their choice in the flesh as well as in their minds and hearts. Adam and Eve stand exiled, driven out, separated

forever from the sacred ground of Eden, and the child, "the captured young of a wild creature," is turned over to "the hands of strangers" her mother didn't trust.

In this episode, Zitkala-Sa has appropriated the stories and voices of both her Yankton people and Judeo-Christians, and she has bent them to shape her own voice. The traditional Iktomi is "not your relative" in the traditional sense of the word, according to Deloria. He is "without heart," selfish, manipulative, and deceitful, as he goes about his business of making fools of his victims. This is also true of the missionaries, but the similarity to the traditional character ends there. The traditional Iktomi "wills nothing consciously," acts on more impulse, and cannot be regarded as inherently evil. But the missionaries in this story are more like the premeditative serpent--the personification of Evil--in Genesis. There is no humor, no entertainment here; the consequences of his "trick" are too serious. Neither do we see this Iktomi experiencing ridicule or shame at the end, although he does stand accused through this essay. He is indicted when the child, in "trembling" fear, clutches a wall in place of her mother, and he is indicted by the last words we hear from her mother:

> This tearing her away, so young, from her mother is necessary, if I would have her an educated woman. The palefaces, who owe us a large debt for stolen lands, have begun to pay a tardy justice in offering some education to our children. But I know my daughter must suffer keenly in this experiment. For her sake, I dread to tell you my reply to the missionaries. Go, tell them that they may take my little daughter, and that the Great Spirit shall not fail to reward them according to their hearts.(44)

This mother knows these "palefaces." She has grown up on Iktomi stories, and she has learned to watch for him. The gracious facade of the

missionaries covering their heart(less)ness and the means to cause suffering don't fool her. Therefore, her last line is not a plea, not a prayer, but a curse upon those who have "stolen the land" and the children.

Another significant irony also exists in this passage. In a way, the mother can appreciate the future benefit of an education for her child because she senses the inevitable change in their world, and yet she knows her daughter will suffer from that education experience. However, until her death, Gertrude Simmons Bonnin remained an exile and bore the pain of physical separation from tribe and family for the rest of her life because her mother had rejected her for choosing a "college career against" her will.

"Impressions of an Indian Childhood" was written from exile. "Torn from her native place," her "true home," Zitkala-Sa remained an outsider to the Eastern Euro-American society. Her succeeding essays occur in an alien landscape against the memory of this other childhood and "native" landscape. Arnold Krupat suggests:

> ...the narrative of the "life" of the Indian "hero" can only be structured in a manner consistent with the "tragic" mythos of decline-and-fall...it is only when the Indian "subject" of an "autobiography" acknowledges his defeat, when he becomes what Patterson calls a "state-prisoner" that he can appear as a "hero."[14]

At the end of this essay, the child or "hero" becomes the "captured young of a wild creature"--imprisoned, orphaned, and for the moment defeated. However, the writer of this autobiography never surrendered. Instead she compensated for her loss by creating what Edward Said called "a new world to rule." In and through this written world, she approached

reconciliation with her mother, with her people, and with her cultural heritage.

Notes

1. Zitkala-Sa, "Impressions of an Indian Childhood," American Indian Stories, ed. Dexter Fisher, (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1985) 8.

2. Gretchen Bataille suggests the essays are a step away from the "as-told-to-form" of written narrative where a recorder/editor collaborated with the subject. For Bataille, Zitkala-Sa's stories are not so much "personal life stories" as they are political statements about the hardships she and her people have suffered. However, I believe the reverse is true. To the extent that Zitkala-Sa's essays serve as an interpretation of her past, they also establish her personal identity, and that personal identity becomes the political statement to which Bataille refers. Gretchen M. Bataille and Kathleen Mullen Sands, American Indian Women Telling Their Lives, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984) 12-13.

3. Welch, "American Indian Leader" 158.

4. Brian Swann, Smoothing the Ground: Essays on Native American Oral Literature, (Berkely: University of California Press, 1983) xi.

5. Elisabeth Luther Cary, rev. "Impressions of an Indian Childhood," "The School Days of an Indian Girl," and "An Indian Teacher Among Indians," Zitkala-Sa, in "Recent Writings by American Indians," The Book Buyer: A Monthly Review of Americanm Literature 24 Feb. (1902): 23.

6. Riggs in William K. Powers, "Cosmology and the Reinvention of Culture: The Lakota Case," Canadian Journal of Native Studies 7 (1987): 175.

7. By then, canvas--and "clumsy logs"--had replaced the traditional buffalo-hide used by the Plains Indians for centuries, and consequently, the Indians had become dependent on supplies from the U.S. Government.

8. Welch 42.

9. Ella Deloria in Spider Woman's Granddaughters, ed. Paula Gunn-Allen, 9-10.

10. Welch 68.

11. Fisher, diss. 158.

12. This citation is from the Introduction, but the previous information may be found throughout the text in footnotes written by Ella Deloria, Dakota Texts, (New York: G.E. Stechert and Company, 1932)

13. I have used the King James' version of the Bible since that is the text Zitkala-Sa would have read.

14. Arnold Krupat, "The Indian Autobiography: Origins, Type, and Function," Smoothing the Ground: Essays on Native American Oral Literature, ed. Brian Swann, (Berkely: University of California Press, 1983) 270-271.

CHAPTER VI

"Zitkala-Sa: School Girl and Teacher"

> We discussed our fate some moments, and when Judewin said, "We have to submit, because they are strong," I rebelled.
> "No, I will not submit!" I will struggle first!" [1]

Zitkala-Sa's two subsequent essays reveal a continuing sensitivity to her Euro-American audience and a growing understanding of the white man's world. But they also demonstrate a fierce resistance to the forces of (de)culturation which she encountered in Eastern boarding schools. Both essays, "School Days of an Indian Girl," published in the February 1900 issue of Atlantic Monthly, and "An Indian Teacher Among Indians," published in March of that same year, trace her early experiences with culture conflict and her simultaneous separation from her mother. Although both essays communicate a prevailing tension between two alien cultures and a very personal tension between herself and her mother, the final episode of "An Indian Teacher Among Indians" strongly suggests that Zitkala-Sa never admitted defeat. Instead, she refused to relinquish her Indian spirit and her Indian identity. After resigning from her teaching position at Carlisle, Zitkala-Sa moved to "an Eastern city" where she discovered a "new way of solving the problem" of her inner self. There, like "a cold bare pole...planted in a strange earth"(97), she felt her exile, "clutched her difference," and used that weapon to claim her Indian identity and to tell her story.

"The School Days of an Indian Girl"

In magnified tones of bitter anger and loss, Zitkala-Sa relates seven separate episodes which occurred during her years in boarding school and college. Using the familiar to interpret and make sense of each new experience, both the child and the adult writer struggle through personal and cultural conflict. Just as in Zitkala-Sa's first essay, "Impressions of an Indian Childhood," voices and images from differing landscapes resound and clash with increasing intensity. Throughout the essay, tension persists between the natural rhythms and images from the traditional Dakotah landscape and culture, and the classical rhetoric and more technological imagery from the Euro-American landscape and culture. The resolution of this conflict is most apparent in the ironic voice as it validates and affirms the preeminent value of the "humane" Indian way. Likewise, that voice also indicts the "paleface" for his pervasive (in)humanity and his pernicious system for "saving" the Indian.

Incongruities and the resultant tension between images from this alien landscape and the Dakotah prairie become evident within the first episode. The "iron horse" pulls away from the "Western prairie" to take eight Indian children to the "Wonderland" of an Eastern boarding school. With the "Red Apple Country" allusion to the Judeo-Christian Garden of Eden, the reader expects fulfillment of the children's earlier dream of the "great tree where grew red, red apples... all the red apples [they] could eat." However, this place is not holy, not sacred. Rather, the ironic voice relegates it to a place "beyond"--outside--the living, breathing, and sacred "circular horizon of the Western prairie"(47).

The child suffers an immediate separation from home. Feeling out-of-place in the present, she sinks "deep into the corner" of her train seat. Later, although her voice isn't heard, she breaks the more Stoic Indian restraint of emotion and cries and begs to go home. Outside the train, personified telegraph poles stride by "at short paces." Here in this alien world, the child and the landscape anguish under the impact of the unnatural effects of "paleface" technology. She remembers a similar pole near her home and the way she would listen to "its low moaning," wondering "what the paleface had done to hurt it." Here, in place of a warm afternoon sun, bright city lights "flood" and "glare." In place of soft moccasins, "hard shoes" knock against bare wooden floors. Her mother's lessons in modest behavior, respect for others, and traditional values call to her from the past and quarrel with the behaviors of every "paleface" she meets. The child resents being watched when "bold white faces" stare, "scrutinize," and point at "moccasined feet," while they block the children's way. At the school, a "rosy-cheeked paleface woman" frightens and offends the child when she tosses her into the air. Contrasting with her mother's teachings and behavior, these behaviors no doubt "disturb and trouble" her. But they are less disturbing when compared with the tragic implications in the following lines:

> On the train, fair women, with tottering babies on each arm, stopped their haste and scrutinized the children of absent mothers.(47)

The identities of these Indian children are not defined in terms of an assimilating culture. Instead, they are defined in their dis-association from their Indian mothers. The ironic voice prevails to indict the "paleface" who would so boldly take young children from their mothers,

while it also affirms the strength of the children's Indian identity. In spite of her physical separation from her mother, the child finds comfort in the mother-tongued voice of an older girl.

In the next episode, "The Cutting of My Long Hair," tensions increase between the harsh-voiced and brutal boarding-school regimen and the memories of her mother's traditional wisdom and soothing-gentle ease. Bells sound and clash, calling students to "eat by formula." Without asking permission, a housekeeper strips away the child's blanket, and Judewin overhears the "paleface woman" talking about cutting their hair. Empowered by images of Dakotah taboos, the child refuses "to submit" and hides under a bed until bright lights and peering eyes find her. Still she resists, "kicking and scratching wildly," crying aloud and shaking her head, even when tied to a chair. While her "spirit tears itself" and at times is lost when the animistic scissors "gnaw off" her braids, the child still grows bolder and more rebellious, refusing to be silenced. Again, the writer's strong ironic voice prevails:

> Our mothers had taught us that only unskilled warriors who were captured had their hair shingled by the enemy. Among our people, short hair was worn by mourners, and shingled hair by cowards! (54)

The writer has survived her humiliation to accuse "the enemy"--the boarding-school teachers and staff and the inhumane system that would treat Indian children like "many little animals driven by a herder."

Irony also predominates in the following "Snow Episode." Shortly after they arrive at the school, "three Dakotas" are caught playing in the snow, falling lengthwise to see their "own impressions." Hoping to help her friends avoid judgement, Judewin teaches them to say, "No," when questioned. But Judewin mistakes the woman's question, and so a child

innocently responds to their accuser with an inappropriate, "No." While serving "whipping blows" to the child's backside, the woman suddenly stops and asks the question Judewin had first anticipated: "Are you going to fall in the snow again?" The child responds with "No" again, but this time the woman quits and sends all three to their rooms. Although this is obviously a story of the "unjustifiable frights and punishments" the children suffered, another interpretation of the story reveals a deepening irony in the writer's voice. While the children happily play in their "own impressions," enjoying and appreciating their own identities, the indomitable Euro-American looms to chastize and correct their mistake. In 1878, Captain Pratt, founder of the Carlisle School, said:

> The dawn of a great emergency has opened upon the Indian....He is in childish ignorance of the methods and course best to pursue. We are in possession of the information and help and are able to give the help that he now so much needs.[2]

In these essays, Zitkala-Sa forcefully rejects the prevailing myth that the "childish" and "ignorant" Indian would eventually follow the correct "impression" of the "paleface" to become indistinguishable from the Euro-American.

Another irony also occurs in this "Snow Episode." When the violent and brutal force proves ineffective, the "paleface woman" appears shamed and foolish once she realizes the child doesn't understand her. So she hides her weapon, the "half-worn slipper," and strokes the child's "black shorn head." The contrast between the traditional Dakotah discipline of quiet reason and shame and the Euro-American method of violence is obvious. As we read the "Snow Episode" story within the context of Zitkala-Sa's reservation childhood, other images also emerge to reinforce the irony as it validates the tribal identity of Indian people. Even after thirty

years of forced "civilization" on the Yankton Reservation, Indians still insisted on wearing traditional dress, still insisted on practicing give-aways in spite of agents' demands, and they still continued to hold feasts and ceremonies. And four-hundred-year-old images of unmeasured violence directed against innocent and suffering Indians also emerge through the ironic voice as it operates to accuse not just one foolish "paleface woman" but an entire "foolish" race.

None of these experiences proves to break Zitkala-Sa's spirit. On the contrary, once she learns the language and comprehends "a part of what is said," she uses that knowledge to "mischievously disobey" her captors, especially over "needlessly binding" rules. On one occasion, she is sent to mash turnips for the noon meal. Hating the smell and taste of turnips, she bends over the jar and with "hot rage" works her "vengeance upon them" until the "weight of [her] body" goes into the jar. As the "paleface woman" shoves her aside and lifts the jar, "the pulpy contents" fall "through the crumbled bottom to the floor"(60)! But the "scolding phrases" elicit few regrets in the child. Instead, she stands "triumphant" in revenge, and her Indian heart "whoops" over her asserted "rebellion."

Although Zitkala-Sa doesn't identify Iktomi in the next episode, she alludes to the trickster and his behavior. He is the one who stalks "in material guise," and who contrasts with "The Devil," an "insolent chieftain among the bad spirits" who dares to "array his forces against the Great Spirit"(62). Another "paleface woman" at the school shows the child a graphic picture of the "white man's devil," terrifying her with stories of the way he would torture "little girls who disobeyed school

regulations." That night in a dream, the devil comes to her "mother's cottage" and chases the child around the stove while her mother and another woman sit unaffected--and--unafraid. Just as he reaches for the child with "outstretched claws," her mother wakes from her "quiet indifference" and pulls her onto her lap. In that instant, the devil disappears.

In this short episode, the ironic voice exposes the terrible "evil" in the "paleface's" inhumanity to Indian children, especially when contrasted with the mother's more humane teaching that her child should "fear nothing but to intrude [herself] on others." Also, the externalized malevolence in the "white man's devil" strongly contrasts with Zitkala-Sa's traditional Dakotah belief system which recognized the possibility of evil within all humans. Dakotas believed that evil could be avoided if and when the individual learned to recognize its form and action in the real and material world. The Puritan devil image was a combination of animal characteristics, a pernicisous abstract spirit that Christians were taught to fear, not to understand. The story of the dream itself suggests the child already rejects the "white man's devil" and the culture he represents. When he comes to the cottage, he doesn't speak with her mother because he doesn't "know the Indian language." The strength to avoid him rests not in the child's religious following of "school regulations," but in her Dakotah mother's arms. At the time she wrote this essay, Zitkala-Sa had been estranged from her mother for a few years. Although the dream might indicate the writer questions her mother's faithfulness, still, the child is lifted and saved by her mother. In the end, the child resolves her conflict with the devil and reaffirms her

mother's strength and protective power when she locates the devil's picture and scratches out his "wicked eyes" until he disappears. All that remains is "a ragged hole on the page."

In the "Iron Routine episode," the child wakes from early-dawn dreams of free and natural "Western rolling lands" to the clashing metallic sounds of boarding-school technology and to an angel-like facsimile of Christian imagery. The ironic voice again prevails, especially when we interpret this episode as an Iktomi story. Every morning, the children must respond to roll call read by a "paleface woman" who wore a "halo of authority." In contrast with the absolute virtue a "halo" implies, this woman religiously enforces the "iron routine" of the "civilizing machine," by requiring perfect attendance and by disregarding the "dull headache or the painful cough of slow consumption" as valid reasons for an excused tardy. When a "dear classmate" dies after feverishly talking "disconnectedly of Jesus the Christ," the child "censures" the woman for neglecting their "physical ills." Zitkala-Sa condemns her "ignorance" and possibily her foolishness for adhering to the "superstitious" myth of Puritan Christianity. Nevertheless, she gives the woman credit for her "well-meaning" hard work. This suggests that even the child, as well as the adult writer, recognizes this woman as the manipulative, deceitful and frequently ridiculous Iktomi in disguise.[3]

Another situation in this episode may also be interpreted as an expression of the ironic voice. After a temporary sadness over her friend's death, the child again resumes "actively testing the chains which tightly bound" her "individuality like a mummy for burial." On the surface, the writer appears to have accepted the Euro-American value of

the "individual" as opposed to the community or tribe. However, the "individuality" Zitkala-Sa values and desires more likely represents her right to express the "moaning wind" of her Indian nature and spirit. Even though the voice is "low," like the sound "of a curiously colored seashell," it still carries the extra-ordinary Dakotah power of her mother, and of her mother's people, to "stir" black "melancholy" and "sad memories" in the adult writer.

Here, between the fifth and sixth episodes of "The School Days of an Indian Girl," and after three tortuous years at boarding school, the life of this eleven-year-old child takes an irreversible turn. And from that low-moaning adult voice, sent only for "ears that are bent with compassion to hear," sounds the most somber and devasting irony in all of Zitkala-Sa's essays. Three years after leaving the reservation, the child returns home: to the "Western country," to her native place, and to her mother. No doubt she expects to see the same Dakota prairie landscape she has daily imagined while at school in the East. But the landscape has suffered from the effects of "civilization." Young braves in blankets and eagle plumes" are gone, and now Indian teenagers wear "tight muslin dresses" and the "white man's coat and trousers." Now ponies pull "buckboards," and her mother's tepee is transformed into a "low-roofed cottage" with a "wooden doorstep." Now all the teens speak English when they gather for "parties," and her mother has fallen under the "delusion" of the Indian Bible.

Not only is the landscape transformed, but the child's language is also changed, for now she can read and write in English. Consequently, having never entered a "schoolhouse," her mother stands apart from her daughter

on the remote edge of a limitless chasm. Instead of the child resting in the comfort of her mother's voice, she hangs in the "heart of chaos, beyond the touch or voice of human aid," an exile, permanently estranged from her true home. Nevertheless, for one triumphant moment, the child follows an impulse--perhaps the extra-ordinary Dakotah power which has never left the prairie--and "seizes" her brother's pony and buckboard to catch the landscape of her dreams. She "wheels" around, follows the "curve in the road," to drive through the "strong wind" blowing against her cheeks, and to race below the "great circular horizon of the Dakota prairies." Although she feels "reckless and insignificant," this "vast wigwam of blue and green," this "true home," provides a momentary security and satisfaction for the child who is now strong enough to "frighten" a lone coyote into the hills.[4] But suddenly, angry disillusionment replaces her brief triumph. Again she feels accused and isolated when the coyote, like the rude "paleface" children on the train, "points" his "sharp nose" at her, and she doesn't "appreciate" the "kindly interest" of an old man who doubts her competence with the pony and buckboard.

The child can no longer claim a "home" in the coyote's native landscape; neither can she claim the more "civilized" reservation landscape. This is the terrible ironic consequence of the "paleface" kidnapping three years before. Even her brother tells his "baby sister" she doesn't belong. She has thrown away her shoes for the "soft moccasins" in her dreams, has "no hat, no ribbons, and no close-fitting gown," and is too young to attend the "civilized" parties with her brother. Her mother is "troubled" by her "unhappiness" but only offers the "civilized" comfort she expects her educated daughter will value: the Indian Bible, the "white man's papers."

Consequently, the mother is more confused when the child rejects the Bible and sits in the "stony" silence of her private "storm." Believing she can no longer call her daughter back to a lost time and culture, and feeling powerless to address her daughter's spirit, the mother moves "outside," throws "a shawl over her head and shoulders" and "pierces the night" with her loud "wailing" cries. Disoriented and alone, the child stands permanently exiled from the only "true home" she has ever known. Finally, after four summers, she leaves her present "turmoil" and returns to school in the east. Nevertheless, at the end of the episode, the adult writer notes that the child still anticipates a reconciliation when she is "brought back to [her] mother in a few winters."

In the final episode, still refusing to admit the permanent loss of her traditional Dakotah culture and power, the young woman visits the traditional "wigwam" of one of the tribe's "best medicine men" before she returns to school. He gives her a "tiny bunch of magic roots," a symbol of tribal strength and active power which promises her the ever-present company of "friends." The adult writer admits to an absolute trust in the "dead roots" held in a "buckskin bag." Although the writer appears to regard these roots as superstition, calling them "magic," "charms," and the source of "good luck," the ambiguity in one short line suggests a serious and honest belief in their extra-ordinary power:

> Before I lost my faith in the dead roots, I lost the little buckskin bag containing all my good luck.(75)

She never admits to losing her faith, even though a reader might draw that conclusion, and she never suggests her luck changed after she lost the bag. Instead, it is possible to interpret this as an affirmation of a

long-lasting belief in extra-ordinary tribal power, in spite of her estrangement from her mother.

After three more years at boarding school, the young woman writes to her mother and requests "her approval"--not her advice--to attend college.[5] This communication represents the young woman's efforts to resolve at least three conflicts: the conflict between an oppressive Euro-American society and its seemingly powerless victims; the conflict between herself and her mother, whose limited vision of a world beyond the reservation prevents her from understanding her daughter's position; and the young woman's personal conflict between her traditional responsibility as a daughter and her desire for Euro-American power and respect. In comparison with so many other young people from the reservation, Gertrude Simmons would not be satisfied to learn English just for communication with "frontier settlers." Believing, no doubt, that her only power over the encroaching "paleface" lay in more education, she willingly risked further estrangement from her mother who threatened that her daughter had "better give up [her] slow attempt to learn the white man's ways"(76). Nevertheless, in "deliberate disobedience," she disregarded her mother's implied threat and "silenced" her mother's disapproving voice--while she also silenced the comforting voice.

Again, the young woman finds herself in exile, unnourished by her "mother's love...homeless and heavy-hearted," living her life "among strangers...among a cold race whose hearts were frozen hard with prejudice." Still, she doesn't despair. Expressed in imagery from a distant yet present Missouri River landscape, the young woman endures her humiliation and isolation. With "reeds and thistles," she studies and

writes a "magic design" which promises her the "white man's respect." Consequently, in the spring, she enters and wins first place in an oratorical contest. Receiving the "same applause" as the other speakers, and a "large bouquet of roses," she achieves momentary preeminence and pleasure from their invitations to the "students parlor." Yet, their seeming generosities cause her to feel a Dakotah rebuke and shame for the "hard feelings" she has carried. Instead of joining them, she resists their attempts at friendship and walks "alone with the night." Here multiple images from the Dakota landscape emerge, and the writer's strong ironic voice prevails in her choice of "with" rather than "in." Under this same night as a child, she had lain flat on her back to watch the personified stars peep down while she listened to the grandfathers tell their Iktomi stories. Into this same night, her mother had wailed her suffering cries as she "grieved" for her isolated daughter. Although the young woman appears separated and alone, essentially friendless, she walks not at all alone "in" the night. Instead she walks "with the night," together with her Dakotah grandfathers, her Dakota mother, and all who live under the "circular horizon."

The young woman's conflict with her Euro-American peers climaxes in this second essay's final scene. At a statewide competition between orators from different colleges, "college rowdies" ridicule the college "represented by a 'squaw'" and hang a "large white flag, with a drawing of a most forlorn Indian girl on it." The reader may conclude that the young woman triumphs over such prejudice and abuse when she receives one of only two prizes, while "the hands" which had "hurled" the flag "hang limp in defeat." However, that victory is again momentary and fleeting. The

final triumph actually occurs when Zitkala-Sa's ironic voice emerges to idict them all for their vicious inhumanity. Here, in a center of "civilization," in one of the "largest opera houses" in the State, many bright young Euro-American men behave like their stereotypical and "inferior" Indian opponents. In their "noisy wrangling," they begin "warring among themselves." And with "slurs against the Indian" and "barbaric ...insolent...rudeness," they demonstrate a denial of the "civilized" behavior which centuries of Dakotah people had practiced and which Ella Deloria would later voice in print:

> To be a good Dakota, then, was to be humanized, civilized. And to be civilized was to keep the rules imposed by kinships for achieving civility, good manners, and a sense of responsibility toward every individual dealt with.

The writer recognizes her own "inhumanity" evidenced by her "hard set teeth," "fierce gleams," and her laughing "evil spirit." And later in her room alone, she returns to stare into the "crackling fire" as it speaks to the "hunger in her heart" for her mother who still holds "a charge" against her.

This very last scene in the essay, "The School Days of an Indian Girl," indicates the young woman still lives in the midst of irreconcilable conflicts--in the "heart of chaos"--in spite of her oratorical victories. However, the writer's ironic voice does create resolutions for Zitkala-Sa as well as for her race. The following inclusive line suggests one such interpretation: "Here again was a strong prejudice against my people." Although the young woman is the only Indian in competition, here she symbolizes the victimization of the entire Indian community, just as the "student bodies" represent multitudes of ethnocentric oppressors. It is possible to dismiss the final "white-flag" episode as a singular event, a

stupid college prank, but the ironic voice disallows such a convenient denial of culpability. Consequently, the cultural and racial conflict for all Indians is momentarily resolved in this line wherein the writer "holds a charge" against all who have persecuted her "people." One final irony in this essay communicates a resolution of Zitkala-Sa's personal conflict: had she not gone to college against her mother's will, and had she not for a moment "silenced" her mother's voice, then perhaps Zitkala-Sa's readers might never have heard the power and spirit of that Dakota mother as it whispers and moans through these essays.[6]

"An Indian Teacher Among Indians"

Zitkala-Sa's third and final autobiographical essay in this series focuses on a few episodes from her year as a teacher, but it also provides a clear definition of her resolved purpose:

> There had been no doubt about the direction in which I wished to go to spend my energies in a work for the Indian race. Thus I had written my mother briefly, saying my plan for the year was to teach in an Eastern Indian school.(81)

Gertrude Simmons taught at the Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania from 1898-1899. During this time she wrote essays and poetry for the school paper while establishing contacts in the Eastern literary world. A surface interpretation of the above reference to her decision to teach in an Eastern boarding school suggests she had finally decided to follow the "white man's road."[7] Appearing at the beginning of the second episode, "A Trip Westward," her subsequent agreement to go "West to gather Indian pupils for the school" might support the same interpretation. However, the ironic voice again argues against such a conclusion while it

challenges the reader to face the devasting consequences of the Euro-American's efforts to (de)culturate and exploit America's Indian peoples.

Within the imagery alone, the writer demonstrates her refusal to remain the victim and to abandon her traditional Dakotah past for the Eastern and urban landscape. The young woman suffers the consequences of living with an alien culture, where "black veiling" smoke smothers communities, where water pump handles "clank and creak constantly," and where "ghastly walls and ceiling" frame her room at the school. Nevertheless, her solitary movement through that darkness and her communal security in the cyclical harmony of the Dakotah universe is still affirmed in the following image: "Since the winter when I had my first dreams about red apples I had been traveling slowly toward the morning horizon"--toward her work for the Indian race(81). Even as she regards the "imposing figure" of her new employer--probably Captain Pratt--as smiling "kindly" upon her, Zitkala-Sa's traditional Dakotah values accuse him of ethnocentric superiority, of disrespect, and of personal intrusion. "His quick eye" measures her "height and breadth;" he lets her "hand fall," calls her a "little Indian girl, and speaks "more to himself" than to her. And she senses a "subtle note of disappointment in his voice" because her "car-smoked appearance" bears "lines of pain." She has suffered a "serious illness" which forced her to discontinue her college courses, and her "frail and languid" appearance bears witness to her suffering in this alien landscape. No doubt he expected to see a healthy sample of the representative and "civilized" Indian who would prove the success of his assimilationist education programs. Instead, his voice betrays his disappointment, and the writer's ironic voice implies his own fleeting awareness of failure as

he views, "with disappointment," the consequences of the Euro-American system of acculturation which has cost this young woman her "freedom and health."

With the strength of Missouri River willows, she is able to "bend without breaking" under the pressures of her work in this Eastern school. Nevertheless, remaining distant and separate, she moves in an "unhappy silence." Like the exile as defined by Edward Said, she "feels" her "difference...as a kind of orphanhood...and jealously insists on her right to refuse to belong."[8] It is ironic that her superintendent suggests she go West. Maybe he recognized her loss of "homeland" as the cause of her unhappiness. However, the writer expresses little appreciation for that sympathy. Instead, she uses the incident to communicate his disregard for her humanity and his propensity for continued exploitation. From one half-hour of his words, the young woman remembers only one potent line by which she is reduced to the state of a domesticated animal: "I am going to turn you loose to pasture!" And in contrast to her need for "nourishment," his proposal that she should use the trip for recruitment of Indian pupils smacks of further Euro-American exploitation. Whether or not Gertrude Simmons followed her superintendent's direction to recruit students is not revealed in this essay. Instead, the writer leaves the issue here, implies rejection of such victimization, and turns toward her "mother's home."[9]

Having recognized her permanent exile from the home of her childhood, she now stands apart, with an unequalled strength and capability for examining that home "with the exile's detachment." According to Theodor Adorno, a German-Jewish philosopher, the exile can note "discrepancies

between various concepts and ideas and what they actually produce."[10] And so the young woman returns to examine the disintegrated yet still vital and animistic landscape of her reservation home. As the train takes her away from the cities, she begins to recognize "old friends"--"cloud shadows" drifting across "the waving yellow of long-dried grasses." When she leaves the train, the power of her mother and the power in the extra-ordinary wind, seems "determined to blow [her] hat off and return [her] to olden days"(86).

Immediately, the ironic voice speaks through the imagery from a living and breathing prairie, juxtaposed with the writer's description of the "fumbling" and alcoholic driver. Against the "gently rolling land," "round-topped hills," and "nature's garden" of "low shrubs...plum bushes...and wild sunflowers"(88), the characterization of her driver's "unkempt" hair, his twitching "blue eyes--blurred and bloodshot," and his "monotonously" nodding head demonstrates the inability of the white man to fit into this natural and sacred landscape, although she admits he has been there a "long time." Here the writer plays a joke on the "paleface" who would presume superiority over the Indian. His presence is "unnatural" in this landscape, and the similarity of his "nodding" head to the "head of his faithful beast" reduces him, dehumanizes him--a white man, to the state of domesticated animal. When her mother first sees the driver, her response reinforces this ridiculous incongruity. He certainly is no match for her dignified daughter, and so she asks, "My daughter, what madness possessed you to bring home such a fellow?" In the aftermath, the mother and daughter embrace and "laugh away the momentary hurt."

Ironically, the Euro-American's foolishness contributes to a resolution of the conflict between these two women. They leave him behind, and the mother moves into the Dakotah past where she builds a "brisk fire on the ground in the tepee." No longer does the daughter stand confused, hungry for love withheld; instead she sees how her mother has made "only compromises" which "pleased her." And she sees the evidence of her mother's power to maintain her cultural integrity. Naked unstained logs, "a sod roof trying to boast of tiny sunflowers," the rain-soaked earth and roof, and the "smell of damp clay" produce the "peculiar odor," the "natural breath" of her mother's "dwelling." The sunflowers on the roof have "probably been planted by the constant wind," by the spirit and power of her mother who still moves in the ways of the old ones.

Here the tone turns from peaceful reconciliation and subtle irony to overt anger which culminates in a strong political statement. Although the young woman values the "natural breath" in her mother's home, she also recognizes the artificial combination of nature's works and the consequential discomfort her aging mother no doubt experiences living in perpetual dampness. Here looms the reality of the Yankton Reservation's disintegration. Her mother and her brother are "left without means" to fix their home and "to buy even a morsel of food." The young woman's brother has lost his job to a "white son" of the "Great Father in Washington," and the village "these many winters" has been "a refuge for white robbers." Her mother believes it is "folly" for Indian people to complain and try "to secure justice" from Washington, and so it is fair to assume here that her brother lost his job because he had voiced a complaint against the federal government.[11] As a consequence of the

family's suffering, her mother suggests, "there is only one source of justice." When she tells her daughter, "I have been praying steadfastly to the Great Spirit to avenge our wrongs," the young woman reacts from her own conflicts with the "paleface's" Great Spirit:

> Mother, don't pray again! The Great Spirit does not care if we live or die! Let us not look for good or justice: then we shall not be disappointed!(92)

But again the ironic voice finds expression in the words of her mother who has not compromised her belief in the spiritual power of her Dakotah heritage:

> Sh! my child, do not talk so madly. There is _Taku Iyotan Wasaka_, to which I pray.(92)

This episode demonstrates the disastrous consequences of Euro-American exploitation for the Indian people of the Yankton Reservation, but it also demonstrates the profound resistance of Zitkala-Sa and her mother to the forces of deculturation.

The final two episodes reveal the increasing "paleface" encroachment on Indian territory. Together, the mother and her daughter observe how the Dakotah prairie landscape has changed in the thirteen years since the child left for school in the East. Whites rush to make claims on "wild lands"--unallotted tribal lands which were opened for white settlement by the Federal Government in 1895. "Poverty-stricken white settlers" live in "caves," and "twinkling lights" from the "white man's lodge" scatter along the river. Consequently, the "limits" of the Indian landscape, the "village," are progressively shrinking. Although these essays are autobiographical and very personal, they also tell the same bitter story of hundreds of thousands of Indians in their encounters with Euro-Americans.

Not only does this writer's voice testify to the Indians' loss of territorial integrity, but she also accuses the deceitful and hypocritical "paleface" of contributing to their loss of personal dignity as well. In vivid synecdoche, the mother clarifies this Iktomi-like hypocrisy:

> The paleface...offers in one palm the holy papers, and with the other gives a holy baptism of firewater. He reads with one eye, 'Thou shalt not kill,' and with the other gloats upon the sufferings of the Indian race.(94)

According to Bernard W. Sheehan, many Christians believed that "Christianity itself included civilization." From the early 19th century, believing that the Indian should be totally incorporated, "the missionary mind left no room for selective cultural change; it clothed civilization in the message of conversion."[12] Thus for the Indian, conversion to Christianity and the "holy papers" carried the implication of cultural inferiority and consequential cultural breakdown. The more the Euro-American pushed the practices of "civilization," the more the Indian depended on the white man for mere survival. With this increasing dependence, accompanied by an increasing sense of shame, the Indian became more and more vulnerable to "the corrosive effects of civilization,"[13] such as disease and alcohol. Although Sheehan admits the existence of "beneficent" traders, the "worst of the profession created its reputation." Early evidence of their actions appears in a memorial to Congress from the Missouri Baptist Association in 1818. With:

> ...no principle but gain...they defraud the Indians of their property, corrupt their morals, debauch their manners, and consequently, increase the wretchedness of those already miserable people.[14]

It would appear that primary responsibility for the disintegration of the American Indian lies with money-hungry traders, with the United States

Federal Government, and with land-grabbing white settlers. However, the fusion of civilization and Christianity in the body of Christian missionaries made them a perfect symbolic repository for the Indians' resultant blame which is evidenced in the mother's angry diatribe against the "paleface...the white rascal!" For a time, extinction appeared an inevitable consequence of Euro-American/Indian contact. From a pre-contact population of over 8 million, their numbers had been reduced to an all-time low of 250,000 at the time these essays were written. But Zitkala-Sa doesn't admit defeat. Instead, she bears witness in this writing to the extra-ordinary strength and power in her mother who curses the "hated white man's light."

> Raising her right arm forcibly into line with her eye, she threw her whole might into her doubled fist as she shot it vehemently at the strangers. Long she held her outstretched fingers toward the settler's lodge, as if an invisible power passed from them to the evil at which she aimed.(94)

Once the young woman returns to the East and subsequently resigns her position as a teacher, she stands as the emotionally distant and yet intellectually aware exile, who is capable of examining her surroundings with a self-less yet critical eye:

> Now as I look back upon the recent past, I see it from a distance, as a whole.(98)

Consequently, she expresses a more general concern for all Indian children who suffer under the boarding-school system, and she sees teachers not as threats to her own loss of dignity but as destructive threats to other vulnerable Indian children. The white teachers comprise an "army," a military organization capable of waging war against an enemy. With irony, the writer recognizes their motivations for "self-preservation" as evidenced in the teacher who was an "opium-eater," and in the "inebriate

paleface" who "sat stupid in a doctor's chair, while Indian patients carried their ailments to untimely graves"(95). Although both men have responsibilities to women who depend on them, their personal irresponsibility is deplorable. Again, Zitkala-Sa takes the Euro-American generalizations of the Indian--"opium-eating" and "inebriate"--and uses them to condemn the Euro-American himself.

And finally Zitkala-Sa condemns the system and the powerlessness of the "few rare ones" who were incapable of choosing "workmen like themselves." Not only are they powerless, but in their interest in self-preservation, they again play Iktomi and "hookwink" an inspector from the "Indian's pale Father at Washington" by displaying "students' sample work MADE for exhibition." From the writer's distant stance, she remembers the reformers who would visit Indian schools: "specimens of civilized peoples...city folks with canes and eyeglasses, the countrymen with sunburnt cheeks and clumsy feet." Most likely, these were the "friends" of the Indian such as the Boston Indian Citizenship committee, the Women's National Indian Association, and the Indian Rights Association. In their efforts to help the Indian, according to Frederick E. Hoxie, they would promote assimilation, "end frontier violence, stop agency corruption, and 'civilize' the Indians while demonstrating the power and vitality of America's institutions."[15] Zitkala-Sa condemns their ignorance and its consequences for Indian children. "Astounded at seeing the children of savage warriors so docile and industrious," the reformers left, feeling "well satisfied: they were educating the children of the red man!"

Even the most careless or self-righteous reader can't avoid the final question in this essay: "few there are who have paused to question whether

real life or long-lasting death lies beneath this semblance of civilization"(99). I believe these three essays testify to the truth of both conditions. For a time, the writer lived the miserable existence of an exile, "uprooted from mother, nature, and God," hoping to vent her "long-pent consciousness" in an extra-ordinary "flash" of "zig-zag lightning across the heavens." But like so many other exiles, she also discovered "a new way of solving the problem of [her] inner self." Although she never explicitly states her solution, her writing demonstrates her refusal to accept defeat while it undeniably establishes her Indian identity.

Zitkala-Sa's writing generates several levels of interpretations, but the words she hasn't written, the images that are missing, are also capable of interpretation. Missing are the facial features of the mother and her child which would visibly distinguish them as Indian--as separate, "uncivilized," and "inferior" to whites--no strong cheekbones, no dark eyes, no dark skin. Maybe Zitkala-Sa omitted these features because she was more concerned about communicating the internal features or values--the humanity--of her people. It is more likely, though, that Zitkala-Sa felt the five-hundred-year-old Euro-American shame for not being white. This shame surfaces in her comparison between her mother and her aunt, who she was "very fond of." Her aunt was more slender, erect, and less reserved than her mother. In contrast with her mother's heavy black hair, the aunt "had unusually thin locks." The reader might even imagine this aunt as an Anglo woman, not as an Indian woman with back bent from years of hard work and suffering, and not as an Indian woman with the more traditional "reserve" and modesty.

Just as the faces and complexions of Indian people are missing in these essays, so is the father. Although Zitkala-Sa's Anglo father had deserted the family, her mother did marry two other white men. Therefore, in these autobiographical essays, we might expect to find one husband or father living with the family. Yet only once is a father mentioned: "your father too has been buried in a hill nearer the rising sun"(10). Through this story, this expression of her identity, Zitkala-Sa has erased her Anglo heritage. Possibly she felt shame as a mixed-blood, unable to completely belong in her Yankton community because in her lighter skin she bore the brand of the oppressor. For years even the agents had counted mixed-bloods as separate from full-bloods. Whatever the reason, the missing white father does communicate Zitkala-Sa's ambivalence over her identity. Although the child prefers her aunt with the more Anglo features, I believe Zitkala-Sa also erased her Anglo heritage because she wanted to establish an Indian identity for herself.

Extended family is also missing in these essays. "A grandfather" comes to visit and tell stories, "grandmothers" visit and are cared for by the child's mother, but a personal grandfather or grandmother is absent. Maybe the close family had rejected Tate I Yohin Win for marrying whitemen, but Zitkala-Sa's recollections of intimate childhood experiences with other community members would contradict that hypothesis. The mother's description of her older daughter's death, together with the Indian Agent Reports from 1874 to 1902, support another conclusion. In 1880, when Gertrude Simmons was six years old, 16.3% of the Yankton people died from diseases such as: malaria, influencza, "pulmonary and scrofulus" (tuberculosis), and measles. In 1894, the agent reported "few are free

from disease," and in 1901, "95 people died due to consumption and old age." Zitkala-Sa's tribal community was dying, and the absent voices of extended family members tell their death-story.

Although Zitkala-Sa provides the reader with the Indian names of relatives and friends, not one "paleface" is named. Their faces shift and blend together into a multitudinous, yet singular, image. Likewise, the Eastern cities and boarding schools are also not named. Consequently, as the writer accuses one individual boarding-school teacher or system of purposeful inhumanity, so she accuses all who are called by that same "paleface" name. She doesn't name her village or her reservation, and we don't get a sense of the Tiyospaye, or the camp circle, but again, Zitkala-Sa's purpose to communicate the basic humanity of the Indian included all Indians. Eastern boarding schools had recruited and "captured" children from as far West as California, and the suffering and consequent devastation on the Yankton Reservation was certainly not atypical for a Western Indian reservation. Therefore, when Zitkala-Sa omits the names of her village and her reservation, her voice provides defense for thousands of Indian children and parents from across the nation.

The absences of ceremony and overt references to the names and actions of sacred power also reveal meaning, especially since traditional Lakotas maintained their kinship with the ordinary and the extra-ordinary world through ceremony and ritual. We might conclude that the child was too young to know or experience ceremony and that she left her tribal community before she learned about ceremony. Since the stories are written from the child's point of view this conclusion seems probable.

But I believe we may assume she was familiar with ceremony since these essays are written by an adult who had returned to the reservation to visit with elders and storytellers before she wrote these essays. Therefore, we may also assume the absence of ceremony was purposeful as she remembered and shaped and selected events to restructure this time in her life.

There are at four possible reasons for this purposeful exclusion. First, Zitkala-Sa's boarding school community was Quaker, Christian, and not at all disposed to recognize the validity of Indian spiritual practice. Second, her Eastern literary audience, with their assimilationist and Puritan ideologies, would also have rejected the "uncivilized" practice of ceremony. Third, it is possible her Atlantic Monthly editor suppressed this voice and removed all references to ceremony in order to please his readership. Finally, the Indian agents on all reservations, especially J.F. Kinney, the Yankton agent from 1884-1888, condemned "heathen ceremonies and dances" and any evidence of "clinging to the faith of their fathers." Probably Zitkala-Sa wouldn't have been published had she included significant references to ceremony and sacred power.

Other traditional practices are simply alluded to. No explanation of the "tattooed star on the brow of the old warrior" is given, and she later comments about her consequent suspicions of "tattooed people"(17). Two parallel lines on the chin of one old woman are identified as "secret signs" which are never explained or mentioned again. Another woman tells the story of a woman "who had a cross tattooed upon each of her cheeks." But the reader doesn't hear the story. The reader is left with the

mystery and a sense of some connection with evil in the "terrible magic power." These references to the exotic nature of the Indian would have intrigued an Eastern audience, but they also would have been satisfied that Zitkala-Sa had outgrown her identification with such "uncivilized" behavior since she was "ever suspicious" of tattooed people.[16] These particular references may indicate the writer's vulnerability to the opinions of her Euro-American audience. Stories about Iktomi are mentioned, but the stories themselves are absent from the text of "Impressions." It may be that Zitkala-Sa expected to publish a collection of those stories later, or possibly her editors indicated that limited space would prohibit such inclusion. Nevertheless, the allusion to Iktomi would have been understood by English-speaking Sioux readers. With this reading, the writer is no longer vulnerable. Instead she maintains control and power over the story and her audience, since only she--and her people-- know the meaning. In fact, the early mention of "Iktomi stories" provides foreshadowing for the Iktomi--missionary--story in the final episode, "The Big Red Apples."

Zitkala-Sa's writing demonstrates her refusal to accept defeat while it undeniably establishes her Indian identity. Consequently, in this "new world," Zitkala-Sa's personal and cultural conflicts are resolved and conquered. Like Theodor Adorno, she has found in writing "the only home truly available...though fragile and vulnerable."[17] In this written new-world, she also maintained Beatrice Medicine's idea of the traditional role of a Lakota woman:

> 'We are the carriers of culture.' This belief may provide Indian women a mandate to transmit cultural viability, engendering a sense of identity with a unique and satisfying cultural group. It is this that gives Lakota women the

> strength to operate in both the native and the non-native life spheres.[18]

Although Zitkala-Sa uses Euro-American images and rhetoric, these three essays strongly succeed in communicating "the humanity of the Indian," this "unique and satisfying cultural group," to a non-Indian audience. And even with her seeming ambivalence--her struggles in the "heart of chaos," she also succeeds in establishing her native Indian identity. Just as other exiles have done, Zitkala-Sa wrote to "compel the world to accept [her] vision by using willfulness, exaggeration and overstatement" (Said 423). Readers today can experience the lesson, even as the child learns what Ella Deloria voiced years earlier:

> One must obey kinship rules; one must be a good relative. No Dakota who has participated in that life will dispute that. In the last analysis every other consideration was secondary--property, personal ambition, glory, good times, life itself. Without that aim and the constant struggle to attain it, the people would no longer be Dakotas in truth. They would no longer even be human. To be a good Dakota, then, was to be humanized, civilized. And to be civilized was to keep the rules imposed by kinships for achieving civility, good manners, and a sense of responsibility toward every individual dealt with.[19]

It is unlikely that Zitkala-Sa's early nineteenth-century, Eastern literary audience would have experienced the lesson in "humanity" and "civility." They were entrenched in their own hundred-year-old ethnocentric definition of a "civilized" human being. As Bernard W. Sheehan suggests, Euro-American "civilization" could only be achieved through education:

> Education would remove the "drudgery" from the lives of Indian women and would civilize the tribes by teaching them "the whiteman's written lore, his efficient methods for obtaining a livelihood from the land, home manufactures, individualism, and the basic work discipline required of a progressive society."[20]

We must admit that Zitkala-Sa learned the "whiteman's written lore," and we also must admit she worked within and through the Euro-American literary forms and imagery. However, this is more her strength than her weakness--it is part of the fabric of the world she created. If she had not appropriated and manipulated the whiteman's voice, we may not have heard her voice at all. Along with countless other native voices, it would still lie smothered and silent under four hundred years of oppression. With this voice, she takes back what Euro-Americans have kidnapped, kept and killed--the "Indian in Him." Zitkala-Sa's autobiographical stories strongly represent survival and her will to prevail in spite of loss.

Notes

1. Zitkala-Sa, "The School Days of an Indian Girl," American Indian Stories, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979) 54.

2. Frederick E. Hoxie, A Final Promise, The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920, (Cambridge:Cambridge University Press, 1989) 55.

3. Iktomi lacks the Puritan devil's capability for absolute and unredeemable evil.

4. Within this single paragraph, the coyote becomes a wolf, although the writer would certainly have known the difference. It is likely we hear the editor's voice. Perhaps he thought them both the same and wished to provide the reader with an interesting variety of images or vocabulary. "Wigwam" suggests the editor's voice, also, since this is an Algonquin or Eastern Indian word, whereas the word "teepee" would represent Zitkala-Sa's Plains Indian background.
Zitkala-Sa, "The School Days of an Indian Girl," 71.

5. This letter and its subsequent response were probably translated and transcribed for Tate I Yohin Win since evidence suggests she never learned to read or write. 75.

6. These episodes in "The School Days of an Indian Girl" demonstrate Zitkala-Sa's cultural and personal conflicts during her years at boarding school and college, but they also corroborate at least three particular concerns of Yankton Reservation agents. In 1887, Agent Kinney rejected the idea of Eastern schools because they took the brightest and healthiest children from the reservations, and agents and superintendents were forced to fill reservation-school quotas with less desirable children. Past experience also indicated that children educated on "foreign soil" would "lose their health" in the East, and so Yankton agents used such evidence to discourage the idea of removing the children from their home reservations. Zitkala-Sa's references to rows of "variously ailing Indian children" and to her dying friend would support Kinney's fear, although it was also true that many children also suffered illness and death in the Yankton Reservation Government Schools. The agent in 1898 discouraged the idea of non-reservation schools because the boarding-school policies required a lengthy separation from parents. For example, Captain Pratt's program of deculturation at the Carlisle School in Pennsylvania mandated such a separation. To insure the children's break with an "uncivilized" and "pagan" culture, Captain Pratt established the "Outing Program," wherein students were placed in farm homes near the school. Zitkala-Sa's essays suggest that even against their

wills, the children were kept in the East for at least three years.

7. The "white man's road" is a phrase used by late 19th century reformers who promoted "the alteration of native culture to fit a 'civilized' model."
Frederick E. Hoxie, A Final Promise, 33.

8. Edward Said, "Reflections on Exile," 423.

9. Deborah Welch indicates that Captain Pratt had responded with ambivalence over her first publication because he didn't want to hear about her pride in being Indian. After the third essay was published, he was alarmed and decided to send her West to recruit because he feared "subversion of his staff" should Gertrude Simmons (Zitkala-Sa) remain at Carlisle.
Deborah Welch, diss. 19-20.

10. Edward Said cites Adorno, "Reflections on Exile," 425.

11. Evidence from the Annual Reports of the Department of the Interior corroborates the poverty on the reservation which this essay portrays. The agent in 1895 reported that grazing leases paid 6 1/2 cents an acre--per year--to individual owners of allotted land. The sale of unallotted land paid $3.60 an acre held in trust by the Federal Government, although land off the reservation went for $10 to $20 an acre. By 1900, much of the reservation income came from leased lands, with little more than $13 per year per lease. Rations supplied only 15% of subsistence requirements, and annuities supplied 15%. Of course the Indians were willing to sell and lease lands since without that income they would certainly starve. In 1901 the agent recommended that only the old and indigent should get rations. In 1902, James Staley, the Superintendent and Special Disbursing Agent for the Yankton Reservation indicated that David Simmons earned $800 a year while working for his store. This information seems to contradict the evidence from the essay regarding Dawee's unemployment. In her dissertation, Deborah Welch suggested David had been out of work for two years (20); so he may have been working again by 1902. Nevertheless, whether unemployment was a problem for Gertrude Simmons' brother or whether it was the problem of other young men on the reservation matters little. In fact, this same James Staley indicated in 1902 that Indian laborers had been replaced with white employees who gave a "betterment of service." He believed it was "certainly a mistake to employ an Indian on his own reservation."

12. Bernard W. Sheehan, Seeds of Extinction: Jeffersonian Philanthropy and the American Indian, (New York: W.W.Norton and Company, 1974) 126-127.

13. Sheehan 214.

14. Sheehan 225.

15. Frederick E. Hoxie 11.

16. Elizabeth Cook-Lynn (Crow Creek/Sioux) suggests that tattoos were an important identification mark for traditional Dakotapi. When they traveled "the Ghost Road" on their way to the spirit world, grandmothers would ask, "Grandchild, where is your tattoo?" Those who couldn't show a mark were pushed "down an abyss." Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, Then Badger Said This, (Fairfield, Washington: Ye Galleon Press, 1983) 22.

17. Edward Said 425.

18. Bea Medicine, "Indian Women and the Renaissance of Traditional Religion" 171.

19. Ella Deloria in Spider Woman's Granddaughters, ed. Paula Gunn Allen 9-10.

20. Sheehan 119.

CONCLUSION

Zitkala-Sa: A Power(ful) Literary Voice

Operating in a variety of literary, cultural and historical, and critical contexts, literary scholarship today offers a profusion of interpretations of American Indian literary works. We could compare and contrast the autobiographical essays of Zitkala-Sa within the context of Dakotah oral tradition, of Western autobiography and fiction, and within the context of the written Indian tradition which exhibits varying degrees of influence from both Indian and Western-European literary systems. We could examine the verbal structures, patterns, and textures as they reveal meaning within the context of the essays themselves, and we could study the essays within the context of Zitkala-Sa's other writings: letters, oratory, political essays, short stories, poetry, and drama. We could study the way her writing represents or "imitates" the "truth" of the human condition, as well as the way it "creates" a vision of the human condition. We could examine the way her writing interacts with its various audiences. Also, Dakotah and Euro-American cultural and historical systems could provide contexts for interpretations of Zitkala-Sa's autobiographical essays. Finally, and more specifically, we could study the writings of Zitkala-Sa in the context of other women writers, especially those from the Lakota tradition such as Ella Deloria, Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, and Paula Gunn Allen.

For the purposes of this paper, I have incorporated elements from the above approaches, but I have concentrated primarily on the surrounding ethnological and historical systems and contexts which informed the writing of Zitkala-Sa's three autobiographical essays. Living in the wake

of what Kenneth Lincoln calls "four hundred sad years of Indian dispossession," Zitkala-Sa claimed a "contrary ethnicity and dark pride." From the context of exile, permanently torn from her true native home, Zitkala-Sa used elements from the alien Euro-American culture in addition to the power of her heritage to find her own literary voice. With this voice, she created a new world wherein she defined herself as the child of Tate I Yohin Win, her Indian mother, and as the recipient of a powerful tribal spirit and tradition. And with this voice, she transcended her victimization, moved out of isolation and into a tribal community, to create a world where ancestral and grieving, oppressed and still-angry voices could be heard.

We have seen the way Zitkala-Sa has written the oral tradition of her Dakotah people into her essays through allusions to traditional Iktomi stories, through her descriptions of storytelling around the campfire, and through references to the social and interactive aspects of storytelling. Never pretending to speak for herself alone, Zitkala-Sa's literary voice represents the voices of her tribal heritage, as well as her people's historical experiences with extinction and/or assimilation. Likewise, her autobiographical essays may be interpreted as new tellings of the ancient, trickster-transformer stories. In her use of the ironic voice, the writer herself plays the trickster, challenging her Eastern literary audiences' ideological foundations.

Although Zitkala-Sa's essays express both Western-European and traditional Dakotah assumptions about the universe, the child suffers the effects of the conflict between these two world views. The writer presents a Western-European picture of polarized and alienated humankind:

Indian vs. "paleface," humane vs. inhumane, Dakotah spirituality and practice vs. Christian theology and practice, civilized vs. savage, and the Dakotah landscape vs. the Eastern urban landscape. On the other hand, the sacred, harmonious, and interdependent relationship between the individual and the powerful physical and spiritual universe--the Dakotah world--is revealed through the images and voices of the mother, the wind, grandfathers and grandmothers, clouds, night, animals, and the circular sky.

We have seen the way Zitkala-Sa resolves her conflict by maintaining the cultural integrity of her native heritage and by affirming the presence of traditional Dakotah power as it circulates through the mother and her child to perpetuate life, tradition, and tribal community. In the Word, the tribal Voice, Zitkala-Sa's personal experience is clarified and understood as she struggles against separation and isolation to achieve a tribal sense of harmony and balance. Just as the traditional "prose cycles" proposed to entertain as well as to integrate Indian children into the tribe, these essays create community as they recover and protect disappearing cultural values and beliefs.

In these essays, the child suffers the effects of relentless Euro-American encroachment. She is a child of the mighty Lakota people with their complex yet cohesive system of bands and alliances, with their traditional Lakota world view as practiced and perpetuated through rituals and ceremonies, and with their traditional value of women. However, the disintegrating Yankton Reservation and the Eastern boarding school landscapes disclose the devastating losses her people have suffered. Nevertheless, the writer guards against further cultural disintegration

and creates tribal community when she defines the common "paleface" enemy which all tribal peoples must fear.

Following the Western literary tradition, the hero of Zitkala-Sa's autobiographical essays moves toward the achievement of individual Euro-American goals: a college education and personal success in the Eastern literary world. However, she learns the negative effects of individuality--dispossession and displacement. Yet, like many heroes in contemporary Indian literature, the writer ultimately moves into her Dakotah community through the power of Word and Story, through the extra-ordinary power in the feminine Wind and in her mother, to recreate the age-old myth of her people.

In these autobiographical essays, the writer's frequently awkward use of Euro-American and Puritan rhetoric and imagery is juxtaposed with the sounds and images of a Dakotah world. Resulting at times in a weakened native voice, this juxtaposition indicates the writer's discomfort in the alien Eastern landscape. Also, these essays appear to perpetuate certain Euro-American stereotypes of American Indians: Indian women do beadwork; elders tell stories; handsome warriors and braves wear paint and decorations, and Indians wear blankets and "live close to the land." On the other hand, other stereotypes are challenged. An angry and forceful Indian mother and her bold and assertive daughter have replaced the subservient and permanently oppressed female.

Through the prevailing ironic voice in <u>American Indian Stories</u>, Zitkala-Sa has demonstrated her power as a writer and as an Indian woman: to overcome hostile remarks, to define for herself her own identity, to bring a personal and cultural landscape which is cyclical and powerful to her

new surroundings, to endure once innocence is lost, to remain the hero because she survives to accuse the oppressor, to establish the humanity of her Indian people, to tell a story that goes beyond her time, to change the way outsiders view the world, and finally to fulfill the creative role of a Lakota woman as she bears her culture to those who would identify themselves as Yankton/Dakotah Sioux.

APPENDIX I

A Classification of Lakota Cosmology

SPIRIT	OTHER LAKOTA FORMS	ENGLISH GLOSS
ANOG ITE (Walker identifies the Double Woman with (Anog Ite)		Double Face Double Woman Two Face
ANP contraction of ANPETU		Day
CAN OTI	CAN OTILA CAN OTIDAN (Dakota)	Tree Dwellers
ETU		Time
EYA (Wiyohpeyata Wicasa)		The West Wind
GNAS contraction of GNASKINYAN	GNASKI GNASKA	Demon Crazy Buffalo (Walker describes the evolution of the demon into the Crazy Buffalo)
HAN		darkness
HAN-WI (also Hanwi)	WI-WIN (unique to Walker materials) HANWIKAN (unique to Walker materials)	Moon
HU NONP (also HUNOMP)	MATO is the ordinary Lakota word for "bear"	Bear Bear God Two Legged
IBOM	Another name for IYA	Cyclone
IKTOMI	IKTO UNKTOMI (Dakota)	Trickster Spider
INYAN		Rock
ITE (Later Becomes ANOG ITE)		Face

IYA	IYO (form occasionally used in Walker materials)	Eating Monster
KSA KSAPELA (unique to Walker materials)		Wisdom
MAKA	MAKA-AKAN MAKAKAN	Earth Earth Spirit Earth Goddess
OKAGA	from ITOKAGA	The South Wind
PTE-OYATE	OYATE-PTE	Buffalo People
SKAN	TAKU SKANSKAN	The Sky Something in Movement Changes Things That-Which-Moves
TATANKA	TATANKAKAN	The Buffalo The Buffalo God
TATE	TATEKAN	The Wind
TOKA	TOKAHE	The first one The first man The first
UNHCEGA (unique to Walker materials)		Probably an abbreviation of UNHEEGILA
UNK (unique to Walker materials)	UNKTE	Passion
UNKCEGILA	UNCEGILA	Land monster Female UNKTEHI
UNKTEHI	UNTEHI	One Who Kills Water Monster
WAKANKA	KA KANKA	The witch
WAKINYAN		The Thunderbird The Winged One
WAZIYA	WA WAZI	The wizard

WI	WI-AKAN WIKAN	The Sun
WI-CAN (Walker's contraction from WICAHPI)		Stars
WOHPE		The Beautiful Woman The Feminine The Mediator
YANPA	from WIYOHIYANPA, the east	The East Wind
YATA	from WAZIYATA, the north	The North Wind
YUMNI	YUM, YOM, YOMNI	The Whirlwind The God of Love [1]

[1] Elaine Jahner, ed., Introduction, Lakota Myth, James R. Walker, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983) 30-33.

APPENDIX II

Jessie W. Cook: A "Friend" of the Indian

The Jeffersonian idea of Euro-American superiority produced the "positive" criticism of Zitkala-Sa by Jessie Cook in May of 1900. Following the assimilationist philosophy, Cook begins with the question "when will he become Americanized and be of use to the world." Apparently ignorant of the Indian's traditional values, the critic attributes the lack of civilization on the reservation and the continuation of exotic "paint and feathers and quaint costumes" not to the cultural integrity of the Indian people. Instead she suggests it is due to the influence of Americans who are intrigued with the "barbarism" they see, preferring "in [their] heart of hearts that he should remain a savage." Critical of this segregationist language which reinforces "savagry" and relishes the "exotic," Cook berates Americans who continue to see the Indian of two hundred years ago rather than the educated Indians who are a "power among us." Nevertheless, with her humanitarian motivation, Cook would silence the voiced suffering of American Indian people as they move to "raise their race" and "attain a higher order of civilization." Zitkala-Sa is praised for her literary ability and "musical genius," but we can only guess what she might have thought and felt as she read this review. It certainly contrasts with her published comments about the "earnestness of life as seen through the tepee door."[2]

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[1] Jessie W. Cook, "The Representative Indian," The Outlook May 5, 1900: 80-83.

APPENDIX III

Elizabeth Luther Cary: A Critic of Indian Writers

Zitkala-Sa's essays were reviewed in 1902 by Elizabeth Luther Cary who credits three American Indian Writers--Charles Eastman, Francis La Flesche, and "the Indian girl" Zitkala-Sa--for their contributions to "our" literature. Cary claims to have found literary value in Zitkala-Sa's writing because of its:

> ...truly compelling eloquence. Strange, pathetic, and caustic, her phrases burn themselves into the reader's consciousness...whole descriptions are instinct with passion and significance and curbed by a fine restraint. Her emotions, concentred and violent, strike us with an electric shock; the form in which she wraps them is luminous and highly synthetic.(25)

Cary values Zitkala-Sa's contribution because she recognizes her ability to effectively use the English language to create sympathy and to create understanding of the "finer aspects of the old order"(24). However, especially with regard to Zitkala-Sa's writing, Cary reveals an ardent ethnocentrism which would suppress the native voice. She concludes her review by claiming that literature is a "field where differences of race count for nothing and greatness of achievement counts for everything."

With her commitment to the Jeffersonian idea that Indians can raise their level of civilization or status through education and the immitation of rational white ways, Cary denies the voice of Zitkala-Sa which attacks those same ideological foundations of Euro-American superiority. Nevertheless, Cary squirms when Zitkala-Sa's "emotions" strike with an "electric shock." But since an acceptance of the validity of that accusation would contradict Cary's own belief in the superiority of Euro-American civilization, she denies its rationality and regards the

"sympathy" created as "forced." Cary calls the mashing turnips episode from "Indian School Days" "absurd...childish revenge," and she criticizes its inclusion in the text since it destroys the "element of tragedy" when it deviates "from the standard of brevity, emphasis, and incisiveness set for the adequate rendering of a dramatic situation."

Cary quotes Zitkala-Sa in one of her explicit statements of pain: "it was inbred in me to suffer in silence rather than to appeal to the ears of one whose open eyes could not see my pain." Yet with Cary's "open eyes," she is still unable to see the "rationality" of Zitkala-Sa's pain and chooses instead to blame her "rebellion and bitter opposition" and to blame Zitkala-Sa's revolt against civilization" to an "over sensitive nature" or to a "melancholy" which her classmates said was basic to her nature. When Zitkala-Sa went to teach at Carlisle, Cary suggests she "was in no mood to strain her eyes in searching for latent good in her white co-workers." Again, Zitkala-Sa's failure to find happiness or peace was basically her problem and not the problem of the system. It is ironic that Cary patronizes Zitkala-Sa and hopes she may find a "way of solving her problem" which might bring "peace in place of [her present] temper of mind." I believe the writing just reviewed was part of Zitkala-Sa's solution. When she told her stories, she broke her silence, not so much with an appeal for understanding but instead with a sharp accusation of those who had caused that suffering. Cary's criticism of Zitkala-Sa's "forced sympathy" simply demonstrates the effectiveness and power of Zitkala-Sa's writing.[3]

Elizabeth Luther Cary, "Recent Writings by American Indians," The Book Buyer: A Monthly Review of American Literature Feb. 1902: 23-25.

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