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*Ella Deloria's Iron Hawk*, edited by Julian Rice  
[Review]

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*Iron Hawk*. By Ella Deloria, edited by Julian Rice. (Albuquerque : University of New Mexico Press, 1993. Pp. 230.)

The current revival of interest in the works of Lakota ethnologist Ella Cara Deloria (1889-1971) will be more than well-served by the publication of *Iron Hawk*, a story in the culture-hero genre about a man's perilous journey toward maturity and wisdom. This volume is the second in a series of three in which editor Julian Rice, professor of English at Florida Atlantic University, restores Deloria's bilingual literary achievements to public view. The first, *Deer Women and Elk Men : The Lakota Narratives of Ella Deloria* (1992), concerns work drawn mostly from the previously published collection, *Dakota Texts* (1974), a book containing short (3-5 pages each) oral narratives in both English and the original Lakota. Conversely — and usefully — Rice takes *Iron Hawk* from an unpublished 1937 manuscript, "Dakota Tales in Colloquial Style," containing what Rice calls in his introduction "four unusually long stories" (p. 1). The remaining three will soon appear in the third and final volume of this series, *The Buffalo People*. In the volume reviewed here, Lakota and English versions of the narrative are accompanied by an introduction, six interpretative chapters, and two appendices.

Ella Cara Deloria was born a Yankton Dakota. Her father converted to Christianity and became the first native Episcopalian preacher. Not surprisingly, given her father's position, Deloria had little childhood experience with indigenous spirituality, and learned while an adult ethnographer what she had not learned in her youth. After teaching at Oberlin College from 1911 to 1913, she was asked by Franz Boas to teach Siouan dialects at Columbia University. In 1937 Boas asked her to verify and correct the stories collected by a doctor living on Pine Ridge at the turn of the century, James Walker. The relationship with Boas proved fruitful, and they co-authored *Dakota Grammar* (1941). Other of Deloria's publications include *Speaking of Indians* (1944) and the remarkable novel *Waterlily* (1988; dedicated to Ruth Benedict), telling of a young Teton Sioux woman in the pre-contact period.

With Boas' encouragement, Deloria began fieldwork in 1927, but at the same time continued her teaching activities. As an anthropologist and linguist, she documented the Siouan-speaking groups of Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota. Most research she conducted on the Standing Rock, Rosebud, and Pine Ridge reserves. In the late 1920s (Rice does not provide dates) Martha Warren Beckwith hired Deloria to transcribe and translate materials for her book, *Mythology of the Oglala Lakota* (1930). This enterprise brought Deloria in contact with Makula, the primary source for stories about the culture hero she reworks in *Iron Hawk*.

Rice's introduction situates Deloria's life in the ongoing aggression against indigenous peoples by a white government intent on taking their lands. This is important: Deloria's work should be read against knowledge of the

contemporaneous assault on native languages enacted through the clerically-run residential schools. Her research, teaching, and writing were deliberate attempts to keep alive her people's culture and to resist the onslaught of forced assimilation. As Rice notes, "As a substantial piece of literature in an Indian language, *Iron Hawk* makes an implicit statement against brainwashing Indian children out of their own cultures and languages. The specific content of *Iron Hawk* also recognizes the value of traditional tribal education" (p. 8). Deloria wanted to generate widespread awareness of her own people's intelligence and humanity, by means of recording their own words in their own language. In *Iron Hawk* she provides an exemplary tale of nurturance and spiritual wisdom that deserves popular and scholarly attention.

Rice also discusses Deloria's transcription techniques, and how she constructed the story. She wrote *Iron Hawk* in 1937, a year or so after Makula's death. She based it on a compilation of stories told to her by a few older men, notably Makula, which she recalled from memory while writing the manuscript. The story is built in four sections: the hero's adoption and upbringing by the meadowlarks; his encounter with the trickster Iktomi and subsequent escape and marriage; a dangerous seduction by the Rock Woman and rescue by his son; and finally, Iron Hawk's journey to bring the meadowlarks from the east to their grandson's camp in the west.

Deloria's writing is sensitive to how the story would have been heard by her people during the 1930s depression. Its powerful message of renewal, while timeless, would have been especially poignant. The narrative also instructs its listeners in a moral way of life; "The story of *Iron Hawk* presents a hero who makes mistakes that enable readers to understand leadership rather than simply achievement of leadership in spite of mistakes" (p. 13).

The six interpretative chapters provide excellent information enabling the reader unfamiliar with Dakota culture to appreciate the significance of Iron Hawk's story. "*Iron Hawk* as Literature : An Interpretation" demonstrates that Rice is a careful reader as well as scholar. In this chapter, he gives to *his* readers the gift of thoughtful and exacting insights. Certain lines struck me by their sensitivity to the nuance of indigenous American life: "The everyday existence of a hunting culture more nearly approximates the 'creative' process than the routine activities of most work in agricultural and technological economies" (p. 110). The five remaining chapters are briefer, and provide contextualizing information on elemental themes such as meadowlarks, sun, fire, the colour red, cardinal directions, and clothing.

The two appendices are also intriguing. The first reproduces Martha Warren Beckwith's 1930 version of the Iron Hawk story. Reading it after Deloria's version provides an intriguing perspective on paraphrasing in folk studies practice. The second appendix, "Dakota Play on Words," translates and explains puns and other humorous asides. This is a delightful way to end the text.

This is a book for which I would recommend setting aside a quiet afternoon to savour. Although its episodic structure may appear initially strange to a European reader, the story nonetheless has a compelling quality which pulls the reader into its imaginary world of transformations and magic. The pleasure of this text is enhanced by the superlative scholarship evident in its editing. Whether reading for enjoyment or more scholarly reasons, *Iron Hawk* pleases from beginning to end.

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