

Storytelling and Native American Agonies in Zitkala-Ša's Tribal Short Stories

Yumiko YOSHIDA

Introduction

The Native American writer and activist Zitkala-Ša (1876-1938) wrote her book, *American Indian Stories* to achieve her objective to teach non-Native American readers about Native American cultures, customs and traditions. She knew that there were many misunderstandings about Native American among non-Native American readers. Zitkala-Ša tried to correct these problems when writing these autobiographically in *American Indian Stories*, which is composed of autobiographical essays and tribal short stories. To further achieve her aim, one of the methods which Zitkala-Ša applied was to use Christian and a Greek image and metaphors in her short stories contained in *American Indian Stories*.

Zitkala-Ša's tribal short stories, "The Soft-Hearted Sioux," "The Trial Path" and "A Warrior's Daughter" appeared in 1901 in *Harper's Monthly Magazine*. "The Widespread Enigma Concerning Blue-Star Woman" and the story with a Greek image, "A Dream of Her Grandfather," was written for *American Indian Stories*. The last story in the collection, "The Widespread Enigma Concerning Blue-Star Woman" is not analyzed in this paper because its style and purport is a little different from the other short stories.

In the stories I examine, Zitkala-Ša explicates Native American cultures, customs and traditions. In these stories, the characters participate in some rituals and tells stories about the old days. Zitkala-Ša tries to explain traditional cultures through stories, so non-Native American readers can learn about them.

Moreover, these stories have some autobiographical features of Zitkala-Ša. In all of these stories, the protagonists have some similarities with her. Because the protagonists' characters are similar to Zitkala-Ša, readers can read these stories as based on reality and

not perfectly fiction and imagine about Zitkala-Ša.

To make these stories accessible to non-Native American readers, Zitkala-Ša showed her readers similarities between white and Native American cultures, using beliefs from the Bible, as well as a heroine from the Apocrypha. As I argued in a previous essay, Zitkala-Ša struggled with conflicts between Christian values and Native American ones (35-48). Zitkala-Ša had a white father and a Native American mother. In addition, Zitkala-Ša learned about Christianity and white culture at Quaker boarding school called White's Manual Labor Institute in Wabash, Indiana from 1884 to 1887 after an idyllic Native American childhood. This dualism led to her suffering from an identity crisis. Zitkala-Ša generated her works sustained by these agonies. She did not choose her identity, white or Native American; instead she uses her dualism to make her stories and essays accessible to non-Native American readers. Zitkala-Ša found similarities between Native American and white cultures and uses these similarities in her works. It makes non-Native American readers regard Native American figures as human like them. For this reason, she wrote her stories which have Christian and Native American features.

The Isolated Figure in “The Soft-Hearted Sioux”

Zitkala-Ša wrote “The Soft-Hearted Sioux” with Christian images. The Native American male protagonist, who is not given a name in the story, has great faith in Christianity. Zitkala-Ša skillfully makes his character into someone who has a strong mind and will as a Christian as well as a Native American. Moreover, the protagonist has similarities with Zitkala-Ša. The protagonist learned Christianity and Christian culture, and it made him isolated from other tribal members. It is similar to Zitkala-Ša's own experiences.

In the story, there are some lines which show his deep faith in Christianity. He wants to spread Christianity because he learned about it at missionary school. He is certain that Christianity is excellent, so he wants his tribal members to learn about it. Zitkala-Ša wrote about the white Christian values he thought were important. The protagonist declares, “Yet I did not grow up the warrior, huntsman, and husband I was to have been. At the mission school I learned it was wrong to kill” (119). At school, the

main character changes his mind from Native American to Christian beliefs. It is the same for Zitkala-Ša. She learned about Christianity at missionary school and accepted it; from then on, she believed in Christianity. In this point, Zitkala-Ša and the main male character are similar.

Zitkala-Ša adds more descriptions of the protagonist's mind. He says, "I was sent back to my tribe to preach Christianity to them. With the white man's Bible in my hand, and the white man's tender heart in my breast, I returned to my own people. Wearing a foreigner's dress, I walked, a stranger, into my father's village" (120). In these lines, Zitkala-Ša uses strong words and phrases such as "white man," "foreigner" and "stranger." She tried to emphasize how Native Americans disliked outsiders by using these words. Moreover, these words reflect how in Zitkala-Ša's own mind, she became an outsider.

In the story, the protagonist is opposed to the medicine man about which religion is proper for the tribe, as well as who should be chief. Christianity was refused by tribal members. They had faith only in their own religion and the Great Spirit. Zitkala-Ša shows how the tribal members act as follows:

With this he [the medicine man] disbanded the people. When the sun lowered in the west and the winds were quiet, the village of cone-shaped tepees was gone. This medicine-man had won the hearts of the people. Only my father's dwelling was left to mark the fighting ground. (122)

There, Zitkala-Ša shows how the medicine man has a great influence and social position. Finally, the protagonist and his family were isolated from their tribe. Zitkala-Ša describes the unchangeable mind of Native Americans. It is because Native Americans suffered from cruel acts by white people so they hate white religion. Moreover, Christianity does not fit their Native American life and customs. Zitkala-Ša illustrates this great faith in the Great Spirit in another story, "A Warrior's Daughter" which I will discuss later.

Zitkala-Ša emphasizes the protagonist's unchangeable mind. After they are isolated, the narrator and his parents are confronted with hunger. However, he neither changes his religion nor does he entreat his tribal members to forgive him and include his family again. He believes in his salvation. He continues to believe in Christianity: "Yet I believed

my prayers were not unheeded in heaven” (123). In spite of his family suffering from hunger, he does not change his religion but prays to his God. This unchangeable mind makes the main character and his family suffer. Since he believes in Christianity deeply, his family suffers from tragedy. This factor makes an impact on white readers.

Zitkala-Ša illustrates the transformation of the protagonist. His mind returns to his Native American beliefs from his Christian ones. We see this in his mind when his father is about to die. He decides to kill a cow and steal its meat from its white owner. Although the son is discovered by the white settler, and the son also kills him. However, when the son reaches his house, he discovers that his father is dead. It is too late. Finally, the son turns himself into the white settlers and is awaiting his execution. Zitkala-Ša describes his strength as a Native American as follows: “[The guard] comes to warn me of my fate. He tells me that tomorrow I must die. In his stern face I laugh aloud. I do not fear death” (125). In this scene, he changes his mind to that of a Native American warrior. If he still believes in Christianity, he fears death because he committed a crime and must go to hell. Zitkala-Ša illustrates his character as a strong man. When he faces to death, he is not agitated.

In this story, the protagonist does not belong to either Christianity or Native American beliefs. After he changes his faith to Christianity, he does not value Native American customs and religion and it causes his family suffering. In addition, after he kills the white man and steals, he cannot be accepted by Christians because he commits a sin. On the other hand, at the end of this story, he acts as if he believes in both religions. His faith in Native American religion appears in that scene: he steals for his father who suffers from hunger and he takes his mother to the medicine man. On the other hand, this act is also based on one of the Christian Ten Commandments; “Honor your father and your mother” (Exodus 20:12). Moreover, after he steals, he gives himself up and is arrested by whites. The protagonist does not obey a few of the other Ten Commandments; “You shall not kill,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house . . . or his ox, or his ass or anything that is your neighbor’s” (Exodus 20: 13-7). His thoughts waver between both belief systems.

This dilemma is similar to Zitkala-Ša’s own experience. Ruth Spack suggests a similarity between the protagonist and Zitkala-Ša:

[I]n “refusing to smoke his grand-mother’s pipe” [119], the narrator symbolically rejects the Truth. He turns instead to Christianity by way of a mission school, where he learns that “it was wrong to kill” [119]. . . . Zitkala-Ša used the language of the missionary oppressor to remind us of the mother’s advice in “An Indian Teacher Among Indians” to “beware of the paleface.” (35)

In “The Soft-Hearted Sioux,” the protagonist learns white cultures and languages, but then he rejects his grandmother’s pipe which symbolizes his rejecting Native American tradition.

There is another similarity with the main character and Zitkala-Ša. She also sticks to her beliefs. In her autobiographical essay, “An Indian Teacher Among Indians,” Zitkala-Ša wrote: “Though an illness left me unable to continue my college course, my pride kept me from returning to my mother” (104). Like the main character in “The Soft-Hearted Sioux,” Zitkala-Ša did not change her mind once she decided what to do. This stubborn mind caused the relationship between Zitkala-Ša and her mother to get worse and they never reconciled. In “An Indian Teacher Among Indians,” Zitkala-Ša illustrates that relationship; because they believed in different religions, it was hard for them to understand each other.

Through this story, Zitkala-Ša shows us the strength of Native Americans. She makes the main character a figure who had a strong will. After he learns Christianity at school, he professes it deeply. Even though he and his family become isolated, he does not change his faith. On the other hand, he acts against Christian rules. When his father suffers from hunger, he decides to kill a cow that does not belong to him for its meat. It is a crime, but he accomplishes it. In addition, the ending shows his strength that he accepts his death while keeping calm. These descriptions illustrate the strong mind of Native Americans. Zitkala-Ša wanted to show it through “The Soft-Hearted Sioux.”

Zitkala-Ša wrote that story not only for non-Native American readers but also for herself and other Native Americans. She shows her hardship through this tribal story. After Zitkala-Ša changed her religion, she felt alienated. Because of this background, she

projects her hardship on the protagonist. Just as she did in her autobiographical essays, Zitkala-Ša describes how Christianity brought misfortune on Native Americans.

Moreover, Zitkala-Ša uses some Christian motifs to make her story familiar to white readers. In the scene which the main character tries to propagate Christianity, Zitkala-Ša uses the word “serpent” which recalls the Bible to describe the medicine man: “A tall, strong man arose. His loose robe hung in folds over his right shoulder. A pair of snapping black eyes fastened themselves like the poisonous fangs of a *serpent* upon me” (italics mine 122). In the Bible, the serpent in the Garden of Eden is in opposition to God and tempts Eve and convinces her to eat the apple. Zitkala-Ša uses the word “serpent” to describe the medicine man and puts him in the role of villain. On the other hand, the protagonist asks the medicine man to take care of his mother in the last scene. If the protagonist had changed his religion completely, he would not take his mother to the medicine man. Since he has both Christian and Native American thoughts, he acts like this. Moreover, the protagonist does not escape from his sin: he obeys the Christian Commandment, honor thy mother and father. From this scene, Zitkala-Ša explains the complicated feelings of this Native American. Using Christian words in her story, Zitkala-Ša makes her works acceptable by white readers. This method was also used in the autobiographical essays in *American Indian Stories*, so Zitkala-Ša uses Christianity in her stories skillfully.

The Bilingual Heroine in “A Warrior’s Daughter”

In “A Warrior’s Daughter,” Zitkala-Ša uses some of the same methods to make her work more attractive and understandable for non-Native American readers. This story’s protagonist Tusee is similar to Zitkala-Ša herself. Tusee can enter the enemy camp because she learned the enemy’s language when she was little. Tusee’s use of language as a weapon is similar to Zitkala-Ša who wrote her works in English.

In this story, the main female character Tusee is described as a strong and brave person. She has a beautiful face but Zitkala-Ša uses the word handsome to show her as gallant: “As [the enemy] approaches [Tusee] smiles boldly into his eyes. He is pleased with her face and her smile . . . A hand taps him lightly on the shoulder. The handsome

woman speaks to him” (138). In the story, Tusee’s lover is captured by an enemy tribe. To rescue him, Tusee decides to go to the enemy camp-ground alone. After Tusee reaches the enemy camp-ground, she finds the man who captured her lover. Tusee seduces him and kills him using a long knife as follows: “From her unerring long knife the enemy falls heavily at her feet. The Great Spirit heard Tusee’s prayer on the hilltop. He gave her a warrior’s strong heart to lessen the foe by one” (139). Zitkala-Ša shows the strength of Tusee and deep Native American belief in the Great Spirit.

Tusee rescues her lover and goes back to their tribe, showing the strength of Native American women. Spack notes that, “Zitkala-Ša endows Tusee with apparently male characteristics: a “warrior’s strong heart,” which gives her the courage to murder the enemy, and “broad shoulders,” which allow her to carry her lover safely away” (36). In addition, Jeanne Smith notes “[Tusee] can do what a man can’t. . . . Zitkala-Ša closes the story with an image of womanly strength” (54). Zitkala-Ša describes Tusee as a strong character and depicts how Native American women are courageous.

On the other hand, Tusee’s lover is described as helpless and weak. After she rescues him, he cannot walk so Tusee carries him on her back. Zitkala-Ša illustrates this situation as follows: “. . . the young man, numb and helpless, staggers nigh to falling. The sight of his weakness makes her strong. A mighty power thrills her body” (140). This story is quite different from stories which Zitkala-Ša’s readers were familiar with. For example, in “Snow White,” “Cinderella” and “The Sleeping Beauty,” young women just wait for princes to come rescue them. Only the princes fight against the enemies. Writing a story different from those in white culture, Zitkala-Ša surprises non-Native American readers who do not expect this conclusion.

Furthermore, Zitkala-Ša tries to correct the wrong images non-Native Americans have about Native American women. Rayna Green notes:

[I]llustrations [of Native Americans]. . . executed by artists who had seen Indians and ones who had not, ordinarily pictured a male and female pair in America’s place. But the paired symbol apparently did not satisfy the need for a personified figure, and the Indian Queen began to appear as the sole representation for the Americas in 1575. (702)

As Green argues, non-Native American artists distorted the image of Native Americans. Green describes the typical story in which a white man encounters a woman of color as follows, “The [white] man is captured by the King (Pasha, Moor, Sultan) and thrown in a dungeon to await death. Before he is executed, however, the pasha’s beautiful daughter—smitten with elegant and wealthy visitor—rescues him and sends him homeward” (699).

On the other hand, Zitkala-Ša was a Native American artist, so she could describe real Native American lives through her own voice. This is one of the reasons why Tusee is not similar to the princesses of white cultures.

In “A Warrior’s Daughter,” Zitkala-Ša describes the rituals of Native Americans. She describes the feast which celebrates the victory as follows:

In the midst of the enemy’s camp-ground, underneath a temporary dance-house, are men and women in gala-day dress. . . . the merry warriors bend and bow their nude, painted bodies before a bright center fire. To the lusty men’s voices and the rhythmic throbbing drum, they leap and rebound with feathered headgears waving. (137)

To describe the ritual of Native American through the story, non-Native Americans can learn Native American’s cultures and rituals. These descriptions make her story attractive with Native Americanness.

Moreover, Zitkala-Ša likens Tusee to Iktomi who is a Lakota trickster. When Tusee tries to approach her lover and takes him back, she disguises herself as an old woman: “The old bent woman appears at the entrance way. With a cautious, groping foot she enters. Whispering between her teeth a lullaby for her sleeping child in her blanket, she searches for something forgotten” (139). Jeanne Smith suggests that “Tusee is a powerful trickster/savior in this story. Her disguise as a bent woman with a bundle on her back echoes a Lakota trickster tale in which Iktomi throws grass into his blanket and carries it as if it is a great burden in order to trick and catch some ducks” (53-4). Zitkala-Ša disguises Tusee as an old woman and this catches the enemy off guard. Moreover, that disguise has a similarity to the Native American trickster, Iktomi. Through the story,

Zitkala-Ša explicates Native American traditions for non-Native American readers.

Zitkala-Ša sets another goal for Tusee. Like the protagonist in “The Soft-Hearted Sioux,” Tusee has a similarity with Zitkala-Ša. Since Zitkala-Ša can use English, she can write her essays and stories in English. That enables her works to be read by a lot of people which include non-Native American readers. In “A Warrior’s Daughter,” Tusee learns another tribal language from an enemy warrior in her childhood. Zitkala-Ša illustrates this in the following scene:

From an enemy’s camp [the enemy warrior] was taken captive long years ago by Tusee’s father. But the unusual qualities of the slave had won the Sioux warrior’s heart, and for the last three winters the man had had his freedom. He was made real man again. . . . However, he himself had chosen to stay in the warrior’s family. (133)

It is from this enemy warrior that Tusee learns this enemy language. Because of this background, Tusee can lure her lover’s tormentor: “[Tusee] speaks to him in his own tongue. . . . He must know what sweet words of praise the handsome woman has for him” (138). Tusee knows the foe’s language, so she can lure and kill him. Smith notes:

The bilinguality . . . that Tusee in “A Warrior’s Daughter” uses to trick her enemy, also represents an ambivalent sign of power in the author’s own life. For Zitkala-Ša, the conflict between cultures centered on learning the English language. (54)

Since Zitkala-Ša describes Tusee as a bilingual character, Tusee is similar to Zitkala-Ša and obtains a weapon to vanquish her enemies.

In this story, Zitkala-Ša employs the similarities Tusee has with a female character in the Apocrypha, whose name is Judith. In the story, Holofernes who is a brave general in Assyria makes the Judean people suffer. Judith seduces and kills him by cutting off his head while he is drunk and sleeping. Finally Judith saves the Judean people. Readers who know this story may realize that Tusee is similar to Judith. For example, Judith is the daughter of

a reputable family. In “A Warrior’s Daughter,” Tusee is the daughter of tribal chief.

Moreover, there are other similarities between Judith and Tusee. Before Tusee decides to kill the enemy, Tusee prays, “Great Spirit, speed me to my lover’s rescue” (137). Then, she decided to kill him: “From her unerring long knife the enemy falls heavily at her feet” (139).

In the Apocrypha, Judith prays before she kills Holofernes: “When [Judith] came up from the spring she prayed the Lord God of Israel to direct her way for raising up of her people” (Judith 12: 8) Judith prays again and kills Holofernes:

[Judith] went up to the post at the end of the bed, above Holofernes’ head, and took down his sword that hung there. She came close to his bed and took hold of the hair of his head, and said, “Give me strength this day, O Lord God of Israel!” And she struck his neck twice with all her might, and severed his head from his body. (Judith 13: 6-7)

Both Tusee and Judith pray to their Gods before they kill, and kill their enemies using knives (Zitkala-Ša 139). Moreover, as I mentioned above, Tusee has a beautiful face and goes into enemy camp by using the enemy’s language. Judith also has a beautiful face as follows, “[Judith] was in their eyes marvelously beautiful” (Judith 10:14). She tempts Holofernes by telling him a false strategy for defeating her people and delights him: “Her words pleased Holofernes and all his servants, and they marveled at her wisdom and said, ‘There is not such a woman from one end of the earth to the other, either beauty of face or wisdom of speech!’” (Judith 11:20-21).

Zitkala-Ša describes Tusee who has a lot of similarities with Judith. Zitkala-Ša makes her story’s character similar to the Apocrypha, and she reminds non-Native American readers about the Apocrypha. Since these characters have similarities, non-Native American readers understand Zitkala-Ša’s story easily.

The Difficulty of Storytelling in “The Trial Path”

In “The Trial Path,” Zitkala-Ša continues to use some of the same methods to

make this story more accessible for non-Native American readers: she employs Christian motifs and to make the narrator similar to Zitkala-Ša herself. In the story, a grandmother tells her grandchild about her youth. The oral tradition is one of the features of Native American cultures. Since they did not have written records, the tradition, cultures and customs of Native American were in danger of disappearing. To record Native American cultures is one of the reasons, so Zitkala-Ša adopts oral tradition in her story. In this story, Zitkala-Ša describes the similarities and differences in Native American religion and Christianity and Zitkala-Ša teaches Native American thoughts and religion to non-Native American readers.

This story's narration is third-person narration but the grandmother tells her story in first-person narration. This story is about two Native American men who were great friends like brothers. However, the younger man kills the older one. After that incident, the killer is judged by the victim's father. The father decides to forgive the killer if the killer can endure riding a wild horse. The grandmother recalls, "Says our chieftain: 'He who kills one of our tribe commits the offense of an enemy. As such he must be tried. Let the father of the dead man choose the mode of torture or taking of life'" (129). Zitkala-Ša shows us the Native American spirit through this line. To let the victim's father decide how to torture or kill the killer is different from Christian culture. In the Christian society, whites follow state's law and a criminal is judged in a law court, by a judge and a jury. On the other hand, Native Americans judge and sentence a criminal within their community. This difference makes this story more interesting for non-Native American readers because they cannot imagine how it ends.

The grandmother tells her grandchild about the strong will of Native Americans. The killer is able to ride the wild horse so the victim's family accepts the killer. Zitkala-Ša illustrates how the victim's parents greet the young man: the father "cries, with compassionate voice, 'My son!'" and the mother "takes his right hand [and saying] 'My son!' she greets him" (130). Moreover, the victim's sister, who is the grandmother narrating the story, also accepts him: "Slowly reaching out her slender hand, she cries, with twitching lips, 'My brother!'"(130). The trial ends and the victim's family feels grief but they accept the killer because of the trial. This way of thinking is different from that of non-Native Americans. In our present time, if someone kills a family member, the

family is hardly likely to forgive the killer. In addition, to consider the killer as a family member may be too hard for them. This story unfolds rapidly because the victim's family judges and forgives the killer quickly. This speed comes from following Native American beliefs and traditions. Zitkala-Ša teaches non-Native American readers about the way of thinking with Native Americans through this story.

In addition, there is another example of Native American cultures which is different from Christian ones. When the killer dies after fifteen years of marriage, the wild horse he rode is killed at his grave. The grandmother describes the rationale for that custom:

Perchance on the journey along the ghostpath your grandfather will weary, and in his heart wish for his pony. The creature, already bound on the spirit-trail, will be drawn by that subtle wish. Together master and beast will enter the next camp-ground. (131)

Native Americans believe that the deceased can go to the other world together with his favorite pony. This belief is also different from non-Native American one and it makes this story more attractive for non-Native American readers. It is because to believe that the deceased is not alone in the other world is heart-warming for those readers.

From this story, readers can learn about Native American thought and religion. The way of how to judge the killer is different between Native Americans and Christians. Furthermore, in Christian culture, if someone dies, animals are not killed to accompany them. These differences between Christian and Native American cultures make Zitkala-Ša's story more interesting.

On the other hand, Native American and Christian beliefs have some similarities in this story. In the Bible, Jesus says "love your enemies" (Luke 6:27). This is similar to how the victim's family forgives the killer. Moreover, the victim's family accepts the killer as a family member and the grandmother tells his story to her grandchildren. Furthermore, the relationship between killer and victim is like that of brothers. In the Bible, there is also a famous fratricide. In the Bible, Cain and Abel are the sons of Adam and Eve. They give offerings to God, but God disregards Cain. Then, Cain kills Abel. Since Zitkala-Ša made her story similar to the Bible, readers may remember this story in the

Bible. She uses the similarity between her story and Christian story and makes readers to understand her story easily.

There is another aim in this story: Zitkala-Ša illustrates the difficulty in telling traditions to children. In the last part of the story, the narrator's granddaughter sleeps. Zitkala-Ša depicts that scene as follows:

The woman ceased her talking. But only the deep breathing of the girl broke the quiet, for now the night wind had lulled itself to sleep. 'Hinnu! hinnu! Asleep! I have been talking in the dark, unheard. I did wish the girl would plant in her heart this sacred tale,' muttered she, in a querulous voice. [. . .] Still the *guardian star* in the night sky beamed compassionately down upon the little tepee on the plain. (italics mine 131)

In this scene, the narrator wants her granddaughter to listen to her story and tell it to the next generation, but the idea fails. Spack suggests that, "Zitkala-Ša thus symbolically points to the difficulty of transmitting cultural knowledge from generation to generation, even without the intervention of whites, but not its impossibility" (35). However, Zitkala-Ša illustrates a hope which she symbolized by using the phrase "guardian star." Spack indicates that, "As long as the grandmother lives to tell and retell the "sacred tale," the hope exists that the younger female generation will hear it, learn from it, and be able to pass it on" (35).

Through the story, Zitkala-Ša illustrates the way of oral tradition and its difficulty. She gives the role of narrator to the grandmother and gives the role of grandchildren to the non-Native American readers to show the difficulty and hope of transmitting Native American tradition. Moreover, Zitkala-Ša insists that women's power is essential to preserve their tradition. Spack suggests that "Zitkala-Ša suggests that as long as there is a female, the Sioux heritage can be preserved, especially if she is the descendant of a great male leader" (36).

From "The Trial Path," Zitkala-Ša illustrates the traditions and customs of her tribe. As same as other stories, she uses Christian motifs and makes them more acceptable for non-Native American readers. Zitkala-Ša suggests the difference between Native

American and Christian beliefs but also she shows many similarities between them, and makes her story more accessible to a lot of non-Native American readers.

A Greek Motif in “A Dream of Her Grandfather”

In “A Dream of Her Grandfather,” Zitkala-Ša makes a character similar to herself and instead of Christian images, she uses a Greek image to make this story more accessible to her readers. In the story, the female main character works to solve the welfare problems among Native Americans. One night, she has a dream. In her dream, she receives a gift from her grandfather who died many years ago. She is baffled but cannot stop herself from opening the gift. She expects that the box is filled with treasures, but there is nothing inside the box. The box gives her a vision. In the vision, she sees a peaceful Native American camp. Zitkala-Ša describes that vision as follows:

The gift was a fantastic thing, of texture far more delicate than a spider’s filmy web. It was a vision! . . . It was dream-stuff, suspended in thin air, filling the inclosure of the cedar wood container. . . . It was all so illusive a breath might have blown it away; yet there it was, real as life,—a circular camp of white coneshaped tepees, astir with Indian people. (142)

Through a vision from a box, Zitkala-Ša illustrates the life of Native Americans. To use “vision” which is not real thing, she tells their lives ironically because these lives were destroyed by white settlers. This story also illustrates the way of preserving Native American tradition. Spack suggests, “[I]n this story, the unwritten tradition, symbolized by the picture of an Indian camp, passes from grandfather to granddaughter through nature” (36). Similar to the other stories, Zitkala-Ša tells the difficulty of preserving Native American tradition.

This story’s main character also shares similarities with Zitkala-Ša who worked to improve Native American’s lives. Cathy N. Davidson and Ada Norris note:

In 1916, at roughly the same time that she was campaigning against peyote,

Zitkala-Ša was elected secretary and treasurer of the Society of American Indians (SAI), the first national pan-Indian political organization run entirely by Native people. (xxiv-xxv)

Moreover, this story's main character cannot not stop opening the box because she is curious. This scene is similar to Zitkala-Ša's own experience. In her autobiographical essay, "Impressions of an Indian Childhood," when the missionaries came to take Zitkala-Ša to their school, she did not refuse to go. Her curiosity made Zitkala-Ša go to the east. Because she describes the main character with this similarity, this tribal story can be read as Zitkala-Ša's autobiographical story.

In addition, Zitkala-Ša uses an item from Greek myths. The box in the story reminds readers of Pandora's box in Greek mythology. In "A Dream of her Grandfather," no disasters come out. Furthermore, like the ending of the story of Pandora's box, the main character could find hope. Zitkala-Ša illustrates this as follows "She heard distinctly the Dakota words he proclaimed to the people. 'Be glad! Rejoice! Look up, and see the new day dawning! Help is near! Hear me, every one.' She caught the glad tidings and was thrilled with new hope for her people" (142). Since Zitkala-Ša wrote a story with a similarity to a Greek myth, non-Native American readers could read and understand her story easily. Moreover, Zitkala-Ša wanted to encourage Native Americans not to give up their hopes. Zitkala-Ša uses Christianity but also this Greek myth makes her stories more accessible non-Native American readers. Her skillful techniques makes her works more appealing.

Conclusion

Zitkala-Ša's other aim was to show Native American cultures and life through her story. P. Jane Hafen notes, "With the publication of the story 'The Soft-Hearted Sioux,' Zitkala-Ša established a distinct Native American voice" (32). To read "A Dream of Her Grandfather," white readers could learn Native American's cultures and customs. Hafen notes that Zitkala-Ša uses words such as tepees, which is a Native American house, and tomahawks, which are Native American weapons. To use these words in the story,

Zitkala-Ša wrote these works with Native Americanness.

There was another factor which makes Zitkala-Ša's work more attractive. Hafen notes that “. . . the massacre at Wounded Knee, and the closing of the American frontier in 1890 would have been fresh in the minds of many American readers” (32). At Wounded Knee, almost two hundred Sioux members were killed by the federal government soldiers. Eleven years later, “The Soft-Hearted Sioux” appeared in *Harper's Magazine* was 1901. When Zitkala-Ša published this story, the memory about these incidents were fresh for non-Native American readers because of the timing. From that reason, Zitkala-Ša's works attracted a lot of non-Native American readers because of Native Americanness in her stories.

As I discussed above, Zitkala-Ša wrote tribal traditional short stories to employ many methods: to preserve tribal customs and traditions, to set similarities between Zitkala-Ša and characters and to adopt Christian and Greek myth motifs. These efforts helped her non-Native American readers to understand these stories easily.

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