

Explorations in Sights and Sounds

Luci Tapahonso. *Sáanii Dahataal, The Women are Singing: Poems and Stories*. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1993) 94 pp., \$9.95 paper.

Wrapped around the cover of this volume is a painting by Emmi Whitehorse entitled, "White Shell Woman Story III." This is an implication of Tapahonso's Navajo origins—mythical, historical, and personal—which are evident throughout the book. In this work, Tapahonso seems to be aiming at a mainly non-Navajo audience to teach them about Navajo experience—historical and present-day, collective and personal.

In the narrative poem "In 1864," Tapahonso tells the story of the Long Walk, which has been brought to the contemporary narrator's mind by the context of the framing experience in the poem. She also employs the framing device in her prose, where her naturally narrative voice works even better. In the more recent prose pieces, the framing device allows her successfully to use two or more points of view or voices in a piece. "Shúúh Ahdée" and "What I Am" are good examples.

In "Shúúh Ahdée," a story only two and one-half pages long, the frame at both the beginning and the end is from a contemplative young adult's voice—first person plural and present tense. The center section is in third person, past tense—the man's life from his (limited omniscient) point of view. Rather than baffling or annoying the reader, this switch in perspective adds an appropriate texture to the story. "Shúúh Ahdée" is about storytelling in a community—the individual and the community, the I and the we, linked. The various voices used endorses the community aspect of storytelling.

"What I Am," originally published in 1988, is another example of various voices in a piece. The first part of the story, set in 1935, is from the third person (limited omniscient) point of view of Kinlichíí'nii Bitsí, the woman who turns out to be the narrator's great-grandmother. In the next section, the narrator introduces a story from her mother, set in 1968, which appears in first person and is inset like a long quote. The final section of the piece is the narrator's 1987 first person account of traveling and coming home to her mother, grandmother, and the living memory of her great-grandmother. The narrator, we suspect, is Tapahonso herself.

Tapahonso's stories are more substantial than her poems. The poems sometimes are sentimental or didactic and tend toward a flat narrative that lacks the more lyrical layering or building of images and ideas which are intriguing in poetry. However, the depth of the poems, as well as the prose, may be more evident when performed orally. Tapahonso notes in her preface that many of the poems and stories have a song that accompanies the work, a song that is part of

a public reading but which cannot, she says, be translated into English print. The song makes the piece "complete," and it is unfortunate for her readers that the song cannot be a part of their experience.

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Henry Louis Taylor, Jr., ed. *Race and the City: Work Community, and Protest in Cincinnati, 1820-1970*. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993) 297 pp., \$44.95 cloth.

This collection of essays offers diverse perspectives on the social, political, and economic currents that shaped racial and ethnic geography of Cincinnati from the antebellum period through the post- World War II era. Henry Louis Taylor, Jr. offers a unique and instructive collection of works that contribute to a clear understanding of the impact of city-building, economic transition and social-political transformation on the residents of Cincinnati between 1820 and 1970. Throughout the book, the spatial character of the city is the focus while the influence of site and situation of the "Queen City" proscribes its economic fortunes and quality of urban life, especially for Black Cincinnatians.

Essays addressing African American leadership, residential patterns, and occupational opportunity provide rare insight into the fine yet fragile fabric of American urbanization. In the chapter by Taylor titled, "City Building, Public Policy, the Rise of the Industrial City, and Black Ghetto-Slum Formation in Cincinnati, 1850-1940," the interaction of race, housing, politics and geography are offered in a framework that complements the more traditional theories of ghetto formation. Taylor uses maps, statistical indices and historical data to emphasize the dramatic and subtle shifts in the morphology of the city.

The essays on individual reformers and reform organizations provide rich detail of the commitment and persistence among Black citizens of Cincinnati in their struggle for opportunity and equality. Several essays portray the resolve and efforts of these individuals and organizations and are a much needed addition to the history of the American city. That many African American individuals and civic organizations took the initiative in shaping the destiny of the Black community and did not wait for the white leadership to decide what should be done is of note. This observation is, unfortunately, often omitted in standard works on race and urbanization.