

THE RAINBOW ACROSS THE BOUNDARIES:

A STUDY OF LESLIE MARMON SILKO'S *CEREMONY*

by

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ABSTRACT

In order to fully understand contemporary Native American literature like the works written by Leslie Marmon Silko, one must have a sufficient knowledge of the Native American worldviews expressed in their oral stories that have been handed down for unremembered generations. The study has to include what the oral tradition has meant to the indigenous people and their communities, how it has been kept and passed down, and what it can do to the tribal peoples for securing their identity and power to cope with contemporary issues.

Indigenous people have different worldviews from other culture groups; theirs are different in the conception of time and space, the importance of land, of the spirit beings, and the relationships with all the beings in Nature and in the universe.

This study examines how Silko weaves tradition of oral storytelling and worldviews in her writing to pass invaluable messages across the boundaries of culture. Silko has a skill and knowledge ingrained in her blood to write from her tradition, and her works are not only compatible with the worldviews of the Native Americans but also she ingeniously expresses her messages in her works, including *Ceremony*. Silko makes her efforts to convey it to a wider readership. This makes *Ceremony* one of the most significant novels written in the twentieth century.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The History of the Native Americans and Native American Literature

Native Americans are a group of special minorities in the United States of America in that they predate the arrival of Columbus, the so-called “discoverer” of the continent of America. Neither Columbus and his crew, nor the people who supported and welcomed his discovery, realized what were to be waiting for the European invaders; what kind of human beings lived and how they lived on this vast stretch of land. It was an extraordinary, almost foolhardy attempt to occupy it in any way possible in the name of discovery, or in the name of God’s will.

Spaniards, French people, and Anglo-Saxons came and asserted the rights to occupy the land in whatever way it suited each group. The British were in conflict with the French in the Northeast, and the Spanish held the land in the Southeast and the Southwest of the areas which now belong to the United States. After the Crown of Britain gave up its colonies by the conclusion of the American Revolution, the government of the new nation took charge of the tribes it had been handed over by the British Crown. The government made treaties with the Native tribes on the way to expand the area and domination. At the very start of the new government, they thought it easier and less expensive to make treaties than to go to war with each tribe or nation it encountered or would encounter; and it actually was. But over three hundred years of colonization the Indian tribes and nations were reduced to the

status of “domestic dependent nations” as Chief Justice John Marshall defined them in 1831 (Canby, 1998, p.16).

It was not until in the twentieth century that the Indians were given civil rights (Canby, 1998, p.23). But ironically, they were given civil rights mostly because the federal government wanted to alleviate the trustee responsibilities based on the treaties, which had made the tribes cede large tracts of land of their ancestors. The government made hundreds of treaties with tribes all over the country to take the land for the settlers and logging and mining industries. The treaties were broken, and in most cases they were unilaterally abrogated. After many years of colonization the treaties had become the last resort for Indians to secure their living and surviving as tribes and individuals, because they had lost a great amount of their lands and almost all the resources on the lands to live as their ancestors did.

In addition to the dwindling away of their land and the destructive effects of diseases on their population, they had to accept the way of life so incompatible with theirs because of the greed and prejudice on the part of the colonizers. Indigenous people were thought be “primitive” and “savages.” Brian Swann (2004, p.xv) refers to the incapability of Europeans to properly conceive “the other,” and says that in the European concept they were “de facto devoid of logos, or reason. The impact of the Euro-American prejudice on indigenous people was even stronger than the practical loss of land, as the white people thought of them as subhuman incapable of having any accountable culture.

The fact is it took some time after the contact for Euro-Americans to recognize

that Indians were human, and it took still longer to know that their languages had any value other than for conveying practical everyday communication. According to Brian Swann (1992, p.xiii), “The fact that Indian had a literature of great significance took longest to be acknowledged. Indian songs were regarded as the howls of wild beasts and the stories as, at best, curiosity.” So, it was ambitious of Longfellow even as late as in the middle of the nineteenth century to have taken up a material based on a Native American oral story and adopt it to his own creative effort. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, an erudite scholar and renowned poet, took interest in the narratives of indigenous people, and wrote his epic, *Song of Hiawatha*, in 1855. The style was taken from the Nordic epic and myth, *Kalevala*, and the story was drawn from the Ojibwa narratives in *Algonic Research*, published in 1839 by Henry Rowe Schoolcraft (Clements, 1992, p.36). Longfellow uses the name “Hiawatha” to make a fictional hero, but the fact is Hiawatha was a great Onondaga reformer who realized the Deganawidah Epic (Hale, 1963, p.36).

Because the white people doubted that the Indians were humans with reason and moral, the European colonizers regarded them as having no language refined enough to express anything that would pass as literature. Swann also points out (1992, p.xiii-xiv), “It was not until well into the nineteenth century that the languages and literature of the Americas began to be taken seriously by the conquerors, and not until this century that their complexity and richness began to be fully realized.” Swann spots the oldest attempt to record Indian songs was between 1606 and 1607, when Marc Lescarbot recorded some songs in New France (Acadia). But

unfortunately, he did not translate them into any European languages. The oldest text in English surviving in what is now the United States was published in 1612. Later on the textmakers in the early nineteenth century believed that the impact of the European civilization on Native Americans would probably eliminate the validity and existence of their languages. Native cultures were supposed to be obliterated in the shadows of Western civilization. So the major motive of those early collectors of the Native oral traditions was to preserve what is going to die out.

Otherwise, the attempts and efforts made on the part of the white government officers, merchants, and missionaries were motivated to serve other purposes than academic ones. Lewis Cass, governor of Michigan, for example, studied the Native culture of that region in order to govern the Natives more effectively. Others like Alexander Whitaker published accounts about Indians to address an appeal for funds from England. The white people at that time lacked any authentic motivation to study “savages” and their literature in earnest if ever it existed. In their notion, civilized people possess written languages available for literature, and Indians did not have any proper language and therefore no literature in any refined form. It was an indelible prejudice with conviction of almost all the white colonizers. Moreover, the Puritans and other Christian denominations looked upon Native people in Americas not only as “savages” but also as “demons.”

Writing in the 1820s and 1830s, William Apess, a Pequot writer and missionary, took up the word “Indians” as “a word imported for the special purpose of degrading us (Apess, 1992, p.10).” He rejects the word “Indian” and suggests an alternative

word saying, “But the proper term which ought to be applied to our nation, to distinguish it from the rest of the human family, is that of ‘Natives’ — (Apess, 1992, p.10).” As a Native Christian minister, he made his efforts to convince the conquerors/colonizers that the American indigenous people were not sub-human through his theory of “The Ten Lost Tribes” in the Old Testament. He claimed their humanity common with the white people. So did his followers, and the same consciousness and assertion gradually pervaded including the validity of the Native languages and literature of oral tradition. It was a slow development, and it was sometimes checked and stalled during the assimilation era. In the latter half of the nineteenth century the government started and forced a policy of converting the American Natives into a body of farmers/Christians/English-speaking servants. The Dawes Allotment Act, inaugurated in 1887, was meant to individualize the communal land and it deeply affected them and led to the falling apart of their traditional culture, community, and their ways of life.

During the assimilation period, when agriculture, English language, and Christianity were imposed upon them, linked to the force of the legislature, the Native languages, religions, and cultures were unilaterally obliterated. Almost all the tribal languages were suppressed and eliminated under the federal boarding school system, while every indigenous religion suffered the same fate under the pressure of the missionaries that flourished on every reservation. The loss of the language of successive two generations uprooted their traditional oral literature by the time those policies were reviewed and repealed in the twentieth century. Finally

they came to be allowed to learn and speak their own languages, practice their religions, and choose their ways of life. But it was too late.

Considering that theirs are oral literatures without written records of any kind, the damage was serious. There were so few elders and storytellers left who were able to pass their tradition to the next generation. Before that time, the tribal storytellers handed down their stories that embodied history, legends, myths and prophecies, and after that these were to be lost unless they are saved in any form possible and stowed away in archives. The very same people (the whites) that took every measure to kill Native culture consciously or unconsciously started reinforcing the preservation of Native oral literature when it was on the verge of dying. Gerald Vizenor reports (Vizenor, 1993, p.9); “Captain Richard Pratt, the first superintendent of the federal industrial school at Carlisle said, ‘It is only the Indian in them that ought to be killed.’” The Euro-Americans thought the indigenous culture was going to be extinguished as the Indians themselves were disappearing. The scholars collected songs and stories to consecrate them in anthropological archives and eventually these measures were criticized later by the indigenous scholars who came up with enough tribal background and knowledge.

All the Indian writers and thinkers have declared that their thoughts and writings are not dead things. That they could or should be recorded and kept as documents is as erroneous as the description that the Indians are “savages” or “unproductive.” This is based on the ethnographic concept that we can collect anything as final texts and there should be no changes or development from those

texts, and also comes from the white people's self-righteous sense of value. We have to know that the oral stories constantly shift and grow. There is no final text to any oral story and its performance. This can be exemplified by the traditional storytelling of tribes all over the Americas. A storyteller/Bole Maru dreamer, Mabel McKay (a Pomo and Miwok), states, "Life will teach you about it (the story) the way it teaches you about life (Sarris, 2002, p.194)." She taught us the way how the life and the story are involved with each other. And then Sarris quotes Dennis Tedlock to affirm the intertwined and multilayered relationships between texts and their interpretations.

The story, or the part of it she told, about what the people of Elem saw is likely to be an interpretation rather than a literal retelling on Mabel's part; therefore, it is a comment on another version of the first contact between the natives and the non-natives, in which case we have a comment on a comment, an endless cycle of text becoming interpretation becoming text (Sarris, 2002, p.44).

Dennis Tedlock also comments to a similar effect:

— the storyteller-interpreter does not merely quote or paraphrase the text, but may even *improve* upon it, describe a scene which it does not describe, or answer a question it does not answer (Tedlock, 1983, p.236). [emphasis in original]

To mention one more example, Julie Cruikshank, a Canadian anthropologist and ethnographer, reports that one of her informants and a traditional storyteller, Angela Sidney (a Tlingit), told a story of a heroic ancestor Kaax'achgóok and the

story developed and grew each time she told it to a different group. The storyteller added what had happened to the story since she started telling it, proving that the ancient legend was closely related to the present life of the people and the contemporary world (Cruikshank, in [ed.] Shoemaker, 2002, 3-27).

When the American Indian Movement started in the 1960s, it changed history, and leaders like Dennis Banks, Clyde Bellecourt, Russel Means, and Vine Deloria Jr. paved the road from the reservation to publicity and visibility. The emergence of Indian leaders, together with the pan-Indian perception and movements among the Native people including writers, fired the criticism against the paternalistic policies of the government and advocated a self-help campaign. They were often pushed back by the mainstream forces of dominance, but sometimes they were also supported by the reformers' claim of anti-assimilationism, and they gradually gained freedom of religion and thought. Indian Citizenship Act was inaugurated in 1924, and Indians became the last group in the United States to get the right to vote. It had an ironical implication, though, because the government had wanted to get rid of the responsibility of wardship. But it had taken them a long time to get out of the status of "domestic dependent nations," and it took some more time for Native Americans to be recognized as full-fledged citizens. The Native leaders, Native writers, and their communities began to go hand in hand on their way to gaining powers against the federal and state governments and mainstream cultures. They began their fight against the deep-rooted prejudice, and to empower themselves in many areas of their activities, among which those of the Native writers have been outstanding.

It is not a mere coincidence that N. Scott Momaday, a prominent Native writer, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1969, and almost at the same time the radical movement of the Natives materialized in a series of protests; the occupation of Alcatraz Island (1969), the occupation of BIA Headquarter in Washington D.C. (1972), and the occupation of Wounded Knee, the site of the massacre in 1890 (1973). It was the first time a Native writer was awarded that prestigious prize, though many thought it should have happened much earlier. The event gave encouragement to all the Native peoples as well as the Native writers. Leslie Marmon Silko and other writers and poets had already started writing and publishing their works at that time. The Native writers were achieving more and more attention, and getting larger readership in the English speaking world. Women writers such as Paula Gunn Allen, Luci Tapahonso, Louise Erdrich, and Joy Harjo have been active along with the male writers like James Welch, Gerald Vizenor, and Sherman Alexie, just to mention a few. Their recognition in the wider circle of readers has set the critics and scholars to study more carefully not only the works themselves but also the backgrounds and the cultures those works come from. The Native perspectives came to penetrate into mainstream consciousness and aesthetics. There are, however, conflicts, entanglements, and hard knots here and there indeed, but things around the Native literature seem to be moving slowly toward the fuller understanding of their works.

Silko, as an indigenous writer with distinct worldview and aesthetics says she is aiming at “accessibility” not at “universality,” because she values relationships between what she writes and the people for whom she writes. She explains, “I’m

political in my stories. That's different. I think the work should be accessible, and that's always the challenge and task of the teller — to make accessible perceptions that the people need (Arnold, 2000, p.26).” This ideal of her storytelling is carried out to its utmost effects when it is “told in the same way the wind goes blowing across the mesa. That's what the teller used to have to do anyway, make accessible certain ways of seeing things. This is the beauty of the old way (Arnold, 2000, p.26).” Silko is trying to move into a wider and wider audience. The question is how far readers can get into her works and answer for the accessibility she prepares.

CHAPTER 2

WHAT IS ORAL TRADITION?

Decolonizing the Perception and Developing the Understanding of the Oral Literature

In order to approach Native oral traditions and literature, we have, first of all, to disentangle the layers of misconception and misunderstanding. Louis Owens rightly points out referring to D. H. Lawrence in *Other Destinies: Understanding the American Indian Novel*:

The fact that, as D. H. Lawrence clearly recognized, at the heart of America's history of Indian hating is an unmistakable yearning to *be* Indian — romantically and from a distance made hazy through fear and guilt — compounds the complexity (Owens, 1992, p.3).
[emphasis in original]

We have to get rid of this romanticizing of Indian culture and literature as “others.” It is the vestigial fragments of racism as well as colonialism, based on creating and fearing the “otherness.” We cannot deny the presence of romanticism and xenophobia at the same time, the two sides of the same coin, in the efforts of white anthropologists and folklorists poring over the texts of Native oral stories.

Collecting and studying the stories is worthwhile so long as the texts are to be read with proper knowledge and willingness to accept the background as it is.

Acquiring knowledge has become easier than a few decades ago, but the human receptacle of a new perception is not easy to be reshaped. Thomas King warns in an anthology he edited, “There is the misconception that Native oral literature is an artifact, something that vanished as an art form in the last century (King, 1990, p.xii).”

Elaine A. Jahner describes a more complex level in her essay “Metalanguages” as follows:

Translating what they sensed into terms that might communicate interculturally was impossible because such translation requires knowledge of two ways of knowing, but beyond that it requires that the issue itself make sense to the people to whom it is being addressed. Until the twentieth century, few European intellectuals radically questioned their own epistemological foundations (Jahner, in [ed.] Vizenor, 1989, p.167).

Karl Kroeber poses questions concerning the cross cultural understanding of literary art. He writes:

Aside from these language problems, we must ask ourselves, is it possible to understand a story from a vanished culture whose characteristics we are entirely ignorant. How can we comprehend a mythic narrative without having knowledge about the society in which it originated and whose beliefs and practices and forms of discourse the myth embodies (Kroeber, 1997, 2)?

Kroeber uses the term “a vanished culture,” but indigenous cultures have in no way

vanished. Instead, it is alive in contemporary writings done by Native writers and poets, if not in the form of traditional narratives, and their aesthetics, their all-inclusive worldview, and their epistemology widely different from that of the mainstream literature are all present in every form of Native literatures. What we have to do is to study their cultures and try to get out of our own cultural prejudice and insularity in order to meet the requirements referred to by Jahner that “the issue itself should make sense to the people (us readers) to whom it is being addressed (Jahner, in [ed.] Vizenor, 1989, p.167).”

Louis Owens is right in arguing that as we are demanded to know Greek and Roman mythology and literary history of their Western culture to understand T. S. Eliot, or need to know some background of Beowulf and The Tale of Genji to read those ancient narratives, “Indian writers today have come to expect, even demand, that readers learn something about the mythology and literary (oral) history of Native Americans (Owens, 1992, p.29).”

American Native people have criticized white people’s colonizing practices, such as land theft, and presumptuous imposition of their own language, culture, and religion on Native peoples. Tribal leaders have asserted Indian rights and self-determination. Some of the Native intellectuals now launched their movements to resist the dominant culture in the academics and literary criticism. They have felt the necessity of indigenous criticism in the literary world as well as in the political and legal activities. One of those intellectual leaders, Craig S. Womack, analyzes the reality of Native American literature today in which the best of the Native writings are

being reviewed and criticized mainly by the white scholars and critics. He declared the absolute necessity of indigenous criticism. He writes in his book, *Red on Red*:

We should not allow ourselves, through the definitions we choose and the language we use, to ever assume we are outside the canon; we should not play along and confess to being a second-rate literature. Let Americans struggle for *their* place in the canon (Womack, 1999, p.7). [emphasis in original]

Womack thinks the Natives should not go farther on the way to internalizing dominant culture, but instead they should make the mainstream academics and critics take into consideration and respect what Native critics say about their own literature. The Pulitzer Prize award to N. Scott Momaday is not the coming of age of the Native literature, but it only means the coming of age on the part of mainstream critics and readers, because it was already there to be discovered and appreciated.

One of Womack's comments on the relationships between the tribal literatures and mainstream literature is expressed in the following passage:

I say that tribal literatures are not some branch waiting to be grafted onto to the main trunk. Tribal literatures are the *tree*, the oldest literatures in the Americas, the most American of American literatures. We *are* the canon. Native people have been on this continent at least thirty thousand years. And the stories tell us we have been here even longer than that, that we were set down by the Creator on this continent, that we originate here. For much of this time we have had literatures (Womack, 1999, pp.6-7). [emphasis in original]

In the same vein of argument, Robert Allen Warrior states his view on the desirable future of the Native American literature and criticism:

I envisioned, thus, a bibliography dominated by the literature, and more important, the criticism of American Indian writers. I have tried to respect the demand that Native writers be taken seriously as critics as well as producers of literature and culture (Warrior, 1995, p.xvi).

Womack also argues on the orality in relation to literacy in the concept of the mainstream culture. He asserts the oral tradition in Native literature is not separate from the written literature and rejects its position as secondary to written literature in the following passage:

To legitimize a space for national critical studies and native intellectual history, scholars of Native literature need to break down the oppositional thinking that separates orality and literacy wherein the oral constitutes authentic culture and the written contaminated culture (Womack, 1999, p.15).

He refers to Mayan pictoglyphic symbols before contact which are written first in Mayan and later in Latin alphabet. Womack says that this signifies “these books were used as a *complement* of oral tradition rather than a *replacement* (Womack, 1999, p.16). [emphasis in original] We should not consider Native writers including Silko are second-rate writers in American literature for its orality, nor fake writers in tribal

literatures for *writing* in English.

What Womack calls “Red Stick” literary criticism is equal in strength in the effects on the tribes to their political struggles that have been on for quite a long time.

He says:

I will seek a literary criticism that emphasizes Native resistance movements against colonialism, confronts racism, discusses sovereignty and Native nationalism, seeks connections between literature and liberation struggles, and, finally roots literature in land and culture (Womack, 1999, p.11).

What Womack is advocating here is fully and dexterously being accomplished by Leslie Marmon Silko in her works, especially *Ceremony* (1977), *Almanac of the Dead* (1991), and *Gardens in the Dunes* (1999).

Leslie Marmon Silko is a Laguna Pueblo, born to a mixedblood family of white, Spanish, and Laguna Pueblos. Although her family was one of the most Americanized in the town, she was brought up in the traditional culture of the Pueblos. Most of her cultural immersion came from listening to the stories, all sorts of stories, told by her grandmother, grandaunts and other people around her. As Silko was a keen listener, she absorbed everything she heard, and later availed herself of the inexhaustible heritage of the storytelling.

Keres Oral Tradition and Pueblo Culture

The Pueblos of New Mexico were first “discovered” by the Spaniards about four centuries ago. Their culture was very distinct and was maintained in the face of physical and spiritual invasions of white colonizers, first Spanish and then Anglos. Although the political, economical and religious pressures were strong, they managed to retain their cultural identity. The short-lived victory of the Pueblo Rebellion in 1680 only brought them to final submission and inevitable conformity. Under the mask of nominal Catholic practices, they took their ceremonies underground. They succeeded in hiding their inner world from the outside world.

The history of Laguna Pueblos goes back to around A.D. 1300 according to their origin legends. They came from the Mesa Verde region. On their way to the migration south, they wandered around the area of the lake and finally settled down and built Old Laguna. They were joined by some other neighboring peoples, such as Hopis, Zunis, and Jemes Pueblos. The tribe came to occupy the site of what is now called Laguna by the early sixteenth century. The population increased when other Pueblo people fled to them from drought and the struggle with the Spanish invaders in the late seventeenth century. Over the years, a few Navajo also intermarried with the Pueblos, bringing with them the Navajo traditions into the tribe. Since the sixteenth century, the Spanish entered their region and passed back and forth through Pueblo towns on the way to Mexico. The Pueblos were finally forced to surrender in 1692 after an attack by the troops of Governor Diego de Vargas (Dutton,

1975, P 2).

The Laguna Pueblos were the first of the Pueblos to be Americanized after the region came under the rule of Anglos after 1848. Intermarriage between the Natives and the whites started around 1870s, when George H. Pradt and two Marmon brothers, Walter and Robert, came to Laguna and married Laguna women. Robert was Leslie Marmon Silko's great grandfather. The two brothers had a government contract to set out the boundary markers for Laguna. Walter Marmon was appointed government teacher, while Robert served as governor. According to Elsie Clews Parsons, an anthropologist and the author of *Pueblo Indian Religion* (1939), this group with American blood in them led the Americanization of the tribe, and it was opposed by the Pueblo conservatives, who finally moved to Mesita, carrying away their altars and sacred objects with them. The two kivas of Laguna were torn down by the progressives, and what were left of the sacred objects were surrendered. There were no Kachina dances for some time after this Great Split. When the dances were revived, the Zuni influence was so prevalent that they were never what they used to be. The Laguna Pueblos received the strongest influence of American acculturation and intermarriage among the neighboring tribes. The continuing strength of Laguna tradition with its flexibility to use alien traditions for their own purposes is one of the characteristics of Laguna culture, and it also marks Silko's literary works.

Leslie Marmon Silko was born in Albuquerque and was raised up in a Laguna family. As her great grandfather, Robert Marmon, was white, she is a mixedblood

with some Anglo and Spanish blood in her. According to Silko's own portrayals of her white ancestors, the Marmon brothers were no instigators or meddlers "but anthropologists overestimated their importance and their tenuous position in the Pueblo (Silko, 1996, p.104)." The anthropologists from outside the tribe did not know what would happen once the outsiders crossed the line to be involved in the tribe such as in marriage. Silko says, "People at Laguna remember my great-grandfather as a gentle, quiet man, while my beloved Grandma A'mooh is remembered as a stern, formidable woman who ran the show (Silko, 1996, p.104)." She adds that she was fortunate that she was brought up and loved by her great-grandmother and others of her generation. The Pueblo word "A'mooh" means "dear granddaughter," and it is an exquisite expression of endearment. As she always used that word when she addressed Silko, Silko conversely used the same word for calling her grandmother.

Silko grew up listening to stories. The stories in her work *Storyteller* are the weaving together of stories she heard, stories about stories, and stories about storytelling. There are also traditional stories, the outgrowth from them, the interpretations about them, new stories, and documentations arranged in a story way. The work itself is not only about her as a storyteller but also about the community she lives in with its history and reality. Silko remarks, "The ancient Pueblo vision of the world was inclusive. The impulse was to leave nothing out. Pueblo oral tradition necessarily embraced all levels of human experience (Silko, 1996 p.31)." She continues to assert how the Pueblo traditional stories have no boundaries:

Accounts of the appearance of the first Europeans (Spanish) in Pueblo country or of the tragic encounters between Pueblo people and Apache raiders were no more and no less important than stories about the biggest mule deer ever taken or adulterous couples surprised in cornfields and chicken coops. Whatever happened, the ancient people instinctively sorted events and details into a loose narrative structure. Everything became a story (Silko, 1996, p.31).

Hamilton A. Tyler writes about the way of life of the Pueblos in his book, *Pueblo Gods and Myths*:

During his life the Pueblo is surrounded by a number of spirits who may be confined within the visible seats of the gods of the four horizon directions of a Zenith centered above; and a town itself rests above a Nadir which contains below the roots of life. After death the Pueblo returns to the underworld through an entrance within walking distance from the village (Tyler, 1964, p.3).

After death, Pueblos return to the underworld which is the place from where they emerged as a race. So the change to death from life is just a transition, not an end of life. They do not separate beginnings and ends of human life and of everything. Animate and inanimate things are all in a chain, and the cycle of life and death links everything together. Animals give their life for keeping the life of human beings, and the refuse is consumed by plants and vegetation etc., and thus nothing is lost. It is according to this worldview that they treat animals and plants with respect. In Silko's *Ceremony*, many animals and insects work together to save this world from

drought and from ultimate destruction, by visiting underground to ask advice from Grandmother, the Creator, and visiting Old Buzzard to ask for help.

Among Pueblos and other neighboring tribes, Spider Woman is especially respected as Thought-Woman for her wisdom. *Ceremony* is presented as a story told primarily by Thought-Woman, the creator of all things on the earth. It is the grandmother spider who helps the Sun Man in rescuing his sons, the storm clouds, from the Gambler. The spider web is the symbol of cosmos with a center where the spider sits and the energy of the strands converges from all directions. The delicacy and the strength of a spider web is also the symbol of an ideal community. In the correspondence with James Wright (a non-Native poet), Silko thanks for the Belgian lace he sent her from Belgium. The delicacy and strength was just like the spider web. James writes that lace was no help to the Belgians against invasions, but the craftsmanship survived. “Never the less, the art continues to survive, the craftsmen weaving away with the finest precision over the woofs and spools (Wright, 1986, p.45).”

According to Alfonso Ortiz, there are earth navels and mountain navels in Pueblo society, formed by stones like open-ended keyholes. He describes the function as follows:

The mountain earth navels gather in blessings from all around and direct them *inward* toward the village; the mother earth navel is the *source* of all blessings, so they were directed *outward* in all directions. By the system of ideas at work here, everything good and desirable stays within the Tewa world (Ortiz, 1969, pp.21-22).

[emphasis in original]

In *Ceremony*, Tayo looks down from the ridge at dawn after Betonie's ritual practice, and experiences a moment in which every sign of evil civilization is gone. The author describes his feeling like this; "This was the highest point of the earth: he could feel it. It had nothing to do with the height. It was a special place. He was smiling. He felt strong (Silko, 1977, p.139)."

Tyler explains that the story titled *Battle of the Seasons* is based on the replacement of seasons from winter to summer and vice versa at equinoxes. When the myth is retold in English, it becomes a triangular love story, in which Miochin (the spirit of summer) and Shakak (the spirit of winter) fight for a woman called Yellow Woman. In the Euro-American interpretation, the battle is fought and settled on the condition that each man should rule half of the year. Meanwhile, the Pueblo interpretation is based on the long tradition of rituals at the turn of the season. Versions of the story may differ in how the Yellow Woman reacts to the Miochin's seduction; one version tells that the parents ask her to bring him home the next day to replace her miserable husband, Shakak, and in another version, the girl (Yellow Woman) promotes the new affair. After eating corn and melons the narrative goes like this: "It is good. Let us go, to my house I take you.' 'Is not your husband there?' 'No; he went hunting deer.' 'When will he be back?' 'Today at night he will come back.' Then there northward they went (Tyler, 1964, p.167)."

In *Ceremony*, Tayo meets a hunter in traditional attire with tawny thick fur

with a carcass of a deer on his shoulder carrying an old rifle (Silko, 1977, p.207). As Tayo and the reader will find out later, the hunter is Ts'eh's husband. The passage is told in modern narrative as a sequence of the lovemaking passage of the previous night, but it is clear that the appearance of the hunter signifies the arrival of the winter. The narrative of this triangular love filters out the Pueblo's major legend and ritual. This parallels with Tayo's passionate action and reaction in embracing the woman which explains the force of Mother Earth as source of life.

Paula Gunn Allen discusses the story of Sh-ah-cock and Miochin in three different perspectives; feminist (including whites) approach, tribal approach, and tribal feminist approach. She criticizes Euro-Americans' use of the words "battle" and "Ruler's daughter," asserting that it is a ritual instead of battle, and the Pueblos used to have no rulers. Ortiz's description of the moiety system not only underlines and modifies the existence of the Summer and Winter moieties in many other indigenous societies, but definitely illustrates their relations to the spiritual and natural world. Paula Gunn Allen's definition of this legend is "orderly, harmonious transfer of primacy between the Summer and Winter people (Allen, in [ed. Graulich, 1993, p.101)."

Supernatural beings are major characters as humans in Keres oral traditional narratives and also in Navajo culture. Besides the spider, uncle Josiah in *Ceremony* tells stories about animals, insects, and the spirit beings on the land of the Pueblos. The Pueblo world is populated with animate and inanimate things which communicate and work together with human beings, and the humans treat them

with respect and love. Tayo, the protagonist of *Ceremony*, is brought up with stories of frogs as harbinger of rain, snakes as messenger of the spring season, mountain lions as the helpers of hunters, and, above all, he loves to see a mother-spider with her sac of eggs drinking water at the edge of a spring. Even the grasshoppers in the grass along the highway inspire him with a feeling of the transition of seasons and love for the dying. Tayo is shy of killing even ordinary flies, for he has been told the Pueblo myth about the Big Green Fly. He has also learned from his uncle Josiah how to respect the place of the source of life when he went out with Josiah to a spring that would never run dry in the caves.

Patricia Clark Smith and Paula Gunn Allen refer to the kind of experience Tayo has already had before he receives his ceremony of healing. It has prepared him to be a good receptacle of the healing even before he would be accepted as a fully qualified member of his family and his community. The authors say as follows:

Tayo's sensitivity of eye and heart and his care for the life in things compensate for the precise ceremonial knowledge he has never been given, as a half-outsider. Even before the war, his illness, and his awareness of the ceremony that centers on him, Tayo knows how to see and understands that ritual means holding intercourse with the land (Smith with Allen, in Graulich, 1993, p.142).

Tayo can feel, though not declare, that Ts'eh is the spirit of Mt. Taylor (Tse'pi'na'=Woman Veiled in clouds), and he believes in the power of the plant whose seeds Ts'eh has asked him to gather and plant when she is gone. The plant

symbolizes the future of this world as well as of the Pueblo people.

Many similar legends and myths are also found in the southwestern oral traditions; and stories and poems of contemporary writers and poets are based on their traditional tales. Luci Tapahonso's "The Snake Man" is based on the Navajo legend about the bear people and snake people. The Navajos identify wilderness as the spirit of Mother-earth and its symbol of fecundity. Tapahonso's story tells about keeping connection with the land in the name of "Snake Man" who meets children in the graveyard, and it shows the clear sense of land as a living entity. Writers from Southwestern tribes share a common view of the land with diversity of different details. Silko expresses this view in one of her poems in *Storyteller* titled "Storytelling" which begins:

You should understand
the way it was
back then,
because it is the same
even now (Silko, 1981, p.94).

This poem/story is about Yellow Woman and Buffalo Man, which is one of the series in Silko's abduction/elope tales.

We can find many elements of Navajo culture in *Ceremony*. Betonie, the healer, is a mixedblood Navajo, though he does not practice traditional Navajo healing ceremony. Among the Navajo traditional myths, Silko uses Destroyers and witchcraft, which play an important role in *Ceremony*. Though Silko says in the

conversation with Larry Evers and Denny Carr, “It wasn’t until I went out to Chinle that I ever heard witch stories, because people here don’t consider it to be a polite subject for conversation (Arnold, 2000, p.17),” the introduction of the destroyer legend enabled Silko to slough off the conventional notion that all the evil has come from the white people, and made us think in depth about the whole issue of evil and its scope in our life. The way of thinking leads us to the perception of the human nature and how our worldview affects our behavior. According to the legend, the destroyers invented the evil and enjoy exercising their power on us using the stories of destruction. In *Ceremony*, the evil is tracked down to its root, that is, the vulnerability of the human nature and the weaknesses of ties between human beings and insensitivity toward everything around us. Destroyers’ power consists in their own story of separating people and all the things on earth and making them fight with each other. This worldview inevitably invites competition, hatred and sometimes deep grudge.

Their story is just the opposite of the indigenous worldviews embraced by the healers in *Ceremony*. In trying to heal Tayo and to restore the balance and harmony of this world as well, their effort is to connect everything into a circle of community in the broadest sense. The Pueblo medicine man Ku’oosh who came to help Tayo recited a long list of place names, trying to evoke the spirits of the land and to connect them to the life and spirit of Tayo and the people in the community.

As Coyote is an emblem of male heroes in Native literature and has appealed to the creativity of many of the Native writers, Grandmother Spider or Changing

Woman is a crucial female figure in the oral stories and contemporary writings, especially women writers in the Southwest. Patricia Clark Smith and Paula Gunn Allen mention the importance of this legendary deity/spirit as follows:

— American Indian women writers in the Southwest continue to center some of their finest work on direct encounters with the land in the form of the spirits who embody it. Whether Snake-man or Grandmother Spider, Coyote or the angry entity who has been speaking up lately through Mt. St. Helen's voice (Smith with Allen, in [ed.] Graulich, 1993, p.131).

The spirit of Grandmother Spider cuts across indigenous cultures and gives power and expanse to the stories of animals and supernatural beings through the voices of the Native writers. Among the rich diversity in rendering Changing Woman/Grandmother Spider, the above-mentioned critics refer to three women writers for their distinguished treatment of the encounter with the land; Luci Tapahonso (Navajo), Leslie Marmon Silko (Laguna Pueblo), and Joy Harjo (Creek).

The traditional Navajo concept of Earth as Changing Woman is described as the mother of all things on the earth, and her existence is embodied in the topology of the Navajo land, in the construction of their hogans, in the natural force or weather elements, and in the loom of Navajo weaving as well. Lisa Aldred remarks in her essay, "Changing Woman and Her Children: The Enmeshment of Navajo Religion in Their Homelands":

The Navajo believe they were placed in their homelands by the

Creator and told never to leave their boundaries. They view the earth as Changing Woman, who gives birth to them and provides them with all they need for life. Many places on the homeland are sacred sites tied to their spiritual oral histories (Aldred, *Native American Studies*, 14:1, 2000, p.23).

The author also emphasizes that Navajo drypaintings used as ceremonial healing are not mere “symbols” but are “special places of contact with the Holy People where power can be physically exchanged (Aldred, *Native American Studies*, 14:1, 2000, p.26).” The sandpainting which Betonie, the Navajo medicine man, draws for Tayo’s healing in *Ceremony* also works in the same way. Tayo later recognizes the same star formation painted on the shield he finds in Ts’eh’s house. Tayo clearly sees the stars in the shape of the mountain range in Betonie’s sandpainting in the sky on the night of autumn equinox. It was the night when the two stories sharply confronted and diverged from each other. When he refused to kill Emo, or refused to succumb to the witchery’s design, he saw the pattern in the sky:

But he saw the constellation in the north sky, and the fourth star was directly above him; the pattern of the ceremony was in the stars, and the constellation formed a map of the mountains in the directions he had gone for the ceremony (Silko, 1977, p.247).

Without the knowledge of the Pueblo worldview and philosophy, we would not be able to understand the full meaning of this work. *Ceremony* is a book that demands the reader know the Pueblo people’s relation to the spirit beings, animals, and above all, land and environment including everything on earth.

Oral tradition is not simply a form of art or a literary genre; it is a deep-rooted epistemology and esthetics based on the long history of culture and philosophy of the Native peoples. Whatever form the individual Native writer should choose in writing his or her work, or whatever genre the reader may consider it to belong in is not relevant so far as the work represents their culture centering on the worldview concerning land and community.

CHAPTER 3

*CEREMONY*Tayo's Loss

Ceremony begins with a scene in which Tayo is lying on the iron bed of the veterans' hospital feverish and sweating, with nothing familiar to comfort him. He has nothing to ease himself into sleep and to heal him from an endless nausea. Having finally returned home from the war, he reflects on how he has been feeling:

For a long time he had been white smoke. He did not realize that until he left the hospital, because white smoke had no consciousness of itself. It faded into the white world of their bed sheets and walls; it was sucked away by the words of doctors who tried to talk to the invisible scattered smoke. He had seen outlines of gray steel tables, outlines of the food they pushed into his mouth, which was only an outline too, like his mouth, which he saw. They saw his outlines but they did not realize it was hollow inside (Silko, 1977, pp.14-15).

Tayo has been hollow inside, physically and spiritually, full of bad dreams of the tropical jungles and the dark, damp rain soaking everything. His dear cousin, Rocky, died a miserable death in the muddy suffocating rain in the jungle. Tayo thought he saw his uncle Josiah appeared before him among the Japanese soldiers. Above all,

Tayo remembers how he could not pull the trigger to kill the Japanese captives under the persistent, endlessly whipping rain.

The tangled memory in him is like colored threads from his old Grandma's wicker sewing basket. He can feel all the entanglement inside his skull when he remembered how it was to disentangle such things. Tayo realizes that the harder one tries to undo them, the more tangled they become until it is impossible to pull them apart at all. The doctor in the war hospital was persistent and kept asking questions. The doctor's voice became louder every time, and it penetrated the edges of the white fog; and one day Tayo heard his own voice saying, "I can't talk to you. He is invisible . His words are formed with an invisible tongue, they have no sound (Silko, 1977, p.15)." When he reached into his mouth, his own tongue was dry and dead like the carcass of a tiny rodent. The dry and dead tongue is symbolic of the loss of his language, and it can be symbolic also of the language of the Native people who suffered all these centuries from the loss of their voices. Tayo's language as well as his identity is in a white smoke, and on the verge of being extinguished. The white doctors called Tayo's problem "battle fatigue" or "shell shock."

Not only visual hallucination but auditory hallucination comes to him, causing him to toss on the bed all night. While rolling himself on the squeaking iron coils of the hospital bed, he hears mixed voices, words and song; a song sung in Spanish, voices in Japanese, Laguna voices, Uncle Josiah speaking, and what he believes to be his mother speaking followed by a language he does not understand. We understand that Tayo is seeking his identity hidden somewhere deep in this

mixture of voices, although it sounds like chaos itself.

Tayo was sent back home by train, and when he came back to his house, or more precisely his Auntie's house, in Laguna, he could not get out of the bed. He was still suffering from nausea, dreaming bad dreams, and waking up only to empty his stomach again and again. Even if the sun climbed up, it looked small in the empty sky, with no exulting sensation of the sunrise. He was thinking of his uncle Josiah who died during his absence and of his cousin Rocky who was killed in the war. Tayo felt guilty because he failed to help Josiah to realize his dream, a dream of raising Mexican cattle together. He also felt guilty for Rocky and for Auntie, for Tayo had believed Rocky should have lived instead of him, and Rocky was Auntie's only son. He had seen Auntie's grief for the loss of her only hope, her son. It was so painful that he wished he had died in place of Rocky. In *Winter in the Blood*, by James Welch, and *House Made of Dawn* by N. Scott Momaday, the loss of the twin brother is so painful to the one who survived, almost with a sense of guilt.

When Tayo came home, "Auntie stared at him the way she always had, reaching inside him with her eyes, calling up the past as if it were his future too, as if things would always be the same for him (Silko, 1977, p.29)." It was a stare of a person who firmly believed the human character could not be changed, and nothing would be changed whatever may happen. Tayo was a son of Auntie's little sister Laura. He had never known his father. His mother Laura went out with everybody, even with a Black, which many people frowned upon. Tayo was raised with Rocky, the son of Auntie and Robert, but he never felt he was one of the family members, except with

his old Grandma and his uncle Josiah. Tayo was clearly a mixedblood with green hazel eyes, which made him different. Only his old Grandma protected him whenever discussion about family shame started among them, saying, "He's my grandson (Silko, 1977, p.33)." It was Grandma who sent for old Ku'ooosh, the medicine man of the tribe, to help Tayo. She declared that she did not care or fear what the other people would say.

Auntie appeared to always fear what other people would say about her family's reputation. Yet, on another level, she seemed to relish her role as the sole member of the family who could carry the shameful burden of rumors as to her family name, due to her Christian belief. Causes for shame due to her family and their behavior were abundant: Laura's promiscuity, Tayo's existence, and Josiah's disreputable relationship with a kantina dancer. Auntie was one of those people who "measured life by counting the crosses (Silko, 1977, p.30)" one should bear, and on top of her son's death she had to take care of her dead sister's half-breed child, which counted much in her sense of martyrdom and it meant another chance to prove that she was a Christian woman. Tayo had known all the time what Auntie was thinking. Tayo never expected love nor recognition of being her sister's son, for Auntie tried to deprive Tayo not only of the memory of his mother but of every chance to give shape to his memory.

The fact that he was different provoked hatred and enmity in Emo, one of his schoolmates and fellow soldiers who had returned as veterans. Emo swore at Tayo during one of the sprees at the bar, "You drink like an Indian, and you're crazy like

one too ---- but you aren't shit, white trash. You love Japs the way your mother loved to screw white men (Silko, 1977, p.63)." And then Tayo jabbed at Emo with the jarred broken beer bottle. Tayo felt he would get well if he killed Emo. Emo's display of rattling the teeth he had collected in the battlefields from Japanese soldiers he had killed made Tayo sick of the memory of the brutal killing they reminded him of. After the crazy attack on Emo, Tayo was empty of feeling and nothing in him was better for it. He remembered how he had felt when he came back from the war and now found that nothing had changed from that time.

He cried because he had to wake up to what was left: the dim room, empty beds, and a March dust storm rattling the tin on roof. He lay there with the feeling that there was no place left for him; he would find no peace in that house where the silence and the emptiness echoed the loss (Silko, 1977, p.32).

The doctor to whom he was sent after the event in the bar diagnosed that he still had psychological problems. The doctor referred to the pattern of drinking and violence emerging among Indian veterans after the Second World War. Tayo shook his head and said, "I don't know what it is, but I can feel it all around me," and added, "Emo was asking for it (Silko, 1977, p.53)."

Mixedblood, or full-blood, or non-Indians, most of us are afraid of changes and differences. People want their children to be the same. Night Swan, a kantina dancer, and Josiah's lover, had hazel eyes like Tayo's. She told Tayo as follows:

"They are afraid, Tayo. They feel something happening, they can

something happening around them, and it scares them. Indians or Mexicans or whites ---- most people are afraid of change. They think that if their children have the same color of skin, the same color of eyes, that nothing is changing.” She laughed softly. “They are fools. They blame us, the ones who look different. That way they don’t have to think about what has happened inside themselves (Silko, 1977, pp.99-100).”

Tayo felt that Night Swan cared a great deal about him after their love-making in her room listening to the rainstorm, and he was sure of something, even if he did not know what it was.

When by chance Tayo found a picture of his mother, he tried to keep it, but Auntie did not let him. Instead, Auntie told Tayo how his mother returned one morning at dawn, walking down the other side of the river with no clothes on except her high-heel shoes. Auntie instilled this shameful image into him, and emphasized she told this only to him because she was his mother as if this would give him a clearer image of his mother and quench his aspiration of keeping her idealized image of her. Tayo’s memory of his mother was so blurred and so sad, but his love for her did not fade away. He did have the memory of his mother’s funeral, which was the howl of the wind and the stinging dust in his face.

He remembered when his mother died. It had been dry then too. The day they buried her the wind blew gusts of sand past the house and rattled the loose tin on the roof. He never forgot that sound and the sand, stinging his face at the graveyard while he stood close to Josiah. He kept his head down, staring at small round pebbles uncovered by the wind (Silko, 1977, p.93).

The dry winds blowing over the earth and the loss of his mother were combined together in Tayo. The earth was deprived of rain and Tayo was uprooted like the pebbles blown up by the harsh wind. In this story the drought on the earth and loss of mother go parallel with each other.

In Pueblo myths and legends, the earth is the mother, the nurturer of everything on earth. The earth cries for rainclouds when it goes dry and unable to raise neither plants nor animals. Loss of mother for a child and loss of nourishment of the earth for a people are identical in impact. His uncle Josiah used to stop and see the splashing water in the cave, the Earth-Mother's bosom. Josiah pointed for Tayo at the springs and narrow canyon that surrounded them and said, "This is where we come from, see. This sand, this stone, these trees, the vines, all the wild flowers. This earth keeps us going (Silko, 1977, p.45)." Tayo knelt down and tasted the deep heartrock of the earth, where the water came from. The drought had lasted for six years, and Josiah, like the holy men who prayed for rainclouds at the mountaintops according to their rituals, went out on horseback at dawn to the spring to pray. Tayo also picked flowers and collected yellow pollen on the way to the spring to sprinkle it over the water. It was his private ritual to soothe the mother earth in the hope of restoring the disturbed balance in nature.

Tayo is a marginal existence in his family and in his community. But it was Tayo who always listened to old Grandma's stories and understood Josiah's desire to experiment on Mexican cattle. Rocky, Auntie's pride and a hero of the high school, did not try to understand the way of Indian people. He wanted to live in a white

society. On the other hand, Tayo believed in the old ways told in the stories:

He never lost the feeling he had in his chest when she (Grandma) spoke those words, as she did each time she told them stories; and he still felt it was true, despite all they had taught him at school --- that long ago things *had* been different, and human beings could understand what the animals said, and once the Gambler had trapped the storm clouds on his mountain-top (emphasis original) (Silko, 1977, p.95).

He believed in the stories of frogs, dragonflies, and all the animals related to human beings and the story of the Spider Woman creating and helping everything on earth. The legend of the Gambler or Kaup'a'ta is a traditional story in which the Sun Man finally defeated conceited, crafty Gambler by the help of Spider, and rescued all the storm clouds out of the prison walls on the mountain. After defeating Gambler, he called to his sons:

“My children,” he said
I have found you!
Come on out. Come home again.
Your mother , the earth is crying for you.
Come home, children, come home (Silko, 1977, p.176).”

The Pueblos think that when Mother Earth is deprived of stormclouds, the balance of nature is disturbed by someone who does not respect her, and she grieves about her children very much for the loss. Thus what he learned from Josiah's and old Grandma's stories had sunk deep in his heart. He loved Josiah and Grandma who

cared for him and accepted him as he was. The death of Rocky before his eyes and seeing Josiah among the Japanese soldiers had been haunting him so persistently that everything around him unnerved him and drove him on the brink of schizophrenia.

When he was asked by Ku'oosh, the tribal medicine man, who came to help him at Grandma's request, he said that he did not know how to explain what had happened:

He did not know how to tell him that he had not killed any enemy or that he did not think he had. But that he had done things far worse, and the effects were everywhere in the cloudless sky, on the dry brown hills, shrinking skin and hide taut over sharp bone (Silko, 1977, p.36).

Tayo begins to realize he cursed the rain in the jungle, bringing disaster on nature even if he did not kill enemies. To Tayo's question, "What if I didn't know I killed one (Silko, 1977, p.36)?" the old man Ku'oosh answered that he was not acquainted with the white warfare in which one would kill across great distances without knowing who or how many one had killed, for example, by touching the button to drop an atomic bomb over an enemy city, and then just fly away. Tayo had known all the time that his sickness was something greater than his own self, something that he could not vomit clear out of his body. He had already been put under the influence of a bigger design. The reader is made aware that Tayo and Mother Earth with everything that she contains and sustains are both sick, and the sickness is beyond the reach of ordinary, traditional healing. We know it failed, for after Ku'oosh left

Tayo confessed that the pain would not go away and that “the old man only made him certain of something he had feared all along, something in the old stories (Silko, 1977, p.38).” But what Ku’oosh told him remained. He said, “It took only one person to tear away the delicate strands of the web, spilling the rays of sun into the sand, and the fragile world would be injured (Silko, 1977, p.38).” Tayo now clearly realized that even though he cursed the choking and murderous rain in the jungle, he had cursed all the rainclouds in the world. Thus in cursing the rain, he had incurred the displeasure of the Reed-Woman in the legend and caused her to go back to her home down below. The song goes like this:

And there was no more rain
 Everything dried up
 all the plants
 the corn
 the beans
 they all dried up
 and started blowing away
 in the wind (Silko, 1977, pp.13-14).

Josiah had said, “Nothing was all good or all bad either; it all depended (Silko, 1977, p.11).” The rain in the jungle was also sensitive to the curse, and it disturbed the balance precariously kept in the universe as described in the song about Reed Woman and Corn Woman. Tayo had to be healed, not to be left to die as smoke dies; otherwise the earth could not be healed from drought.

The Healing

Tayo's healing and the attempt to restore balance in nature required a realization that he had not lost anything, as Silko writes: "---nothing was lost; all was retained, without regard to titles of ownership or white ranchers who thought they possessed it (Silko, 1977, p.219)." The passage refers to the land that had belonged to them and had been taken by white ranchers and settlers. The concept is parallel in Tayo's mind with himself and his identity. His identity cannot be obliterated, however obscure and shameful his birth and origin was, and no matter how weak and dubious his connections were with his family and community. At least he was a grandson of his Grandma, and she tried to help him by sending for Ku'oosh. Tayo ate the blue cornmeal mush and drank Indian tea which the medicine man suggested him to take. For the first time his stomach did not reject the food given to him, a small sign of hope that he was starting to be healed.

The old man Ku'oosh sent him a message advising him to go to a Navajo medicine man who lived on a hill looking down over the town of Gallup. Old Betonie, the medicine man, tried talking to Tayo. Tayo was at first afraid of this old man, wondering if he was not going to kill him, or throw him back again to the quicksand of unpredictable, unfathomable agony of emptiness. Tayo had began to doubt the old man was going to heal him, and he feared all the people wanted to kill him, especially when he noticed Betonie's collection of hairs and toenails to be used for dark rituals.

But Tayo withstood his doubts and fear, and stayed with the medicine man. He began to talk about Josiah, his promise to help his uncle, and about seeing Josiah who died in Laguna in the jungles of the Philippines among the Japanese soldiers thousands of miles away. He talked about the pain coming from the remorse as if “the hollow inside his chest folded into the black hole and he waited for the collapse into himself (Silko, 1977, p.124).” Betonie referred to the Japanese;

“It isn’t surprising you saw him with them. You saw who they were. Thirty thousand years ago they were not strangers. You saw what the evil had done: you saw the witchery ranging as wide as this world (Silko, 1977, p.124).

Then Tayo told about the cattle Josiah had bought from a Mexican, a cousin of a woman called Night Swan, a kantina dancer. Betonie ignored Auntie’s objection to the purchase, and wanted Tayo to tell more about the cattle and the woman with hazel-green eyes called Night Swan. In finding out Tayo’s guilt for Josiah, Betonie seemed to hit on a clue to the entanglement Tayo was in. So far Tayo did not know Betonie’s ceremonies, and he was impatient with the way the old man talked. He did not want to know about the ceremonies, but he needed help. Betonie sensed Tayo’s reaction, and said, “We all have been waiting for help a long time. But it never has been easy. The people must do it. You must do it (Silko, 1977, p.125).” Tayo felt something large and terrifying in the old man’s words, but he had known all along that the white man’s medicine would not work because the world was not working that way, and that the cure had to be found somewhere else. Betonie’s story sounded

persuasive to Tayo when he talked about how the old ceremonies would not work so that new ones should be explored and established. Tayo recognized all the old telephone books and calendars along with the traditional paraphernalia in his huge layers of stacks. According to Betonie, the changing had already begun even if the diversions had been so small, and it became definitely necessary after the white people arrived. He said that it was a wrong idea that they should not change it, for it had been the way to keep the ceremonies strong. He talked about his grandmother and what she had told him:

“She (his grandmother) taught me this above all else: things which don’t shift and grow are dead things. They are things the witchery people want. Witchery works to scare people, to make them fear growth. But it has always been necessary, and more than ever now, it is. Otherwise we don’t make it. We won’t survive. That’s what the witchery is counting on: that we would cling to the ceremonies the way they were, and then their power will triumph, and the people will be no more (Silko, 1977, p.126).”

Betonie’s story brought Tayo to his own memory of the previous summer when he met Night Swan at Cubero before going to the war. He went to her with Josiah’s message to her. While talking to her, Tayo spoke about his mother for the first time. He had brought himself to it because Night Swan had the same hazel-green eyes like his. When she embraced him from under his shaking body, the storm outside was loud and “he could hear the rain rattling the roof and the sound of the old cottonwood tree straining in the wind (Silko, 1977, p.99).” The woman was like rain and the

wind. The rain that day was a blessing to everything on the earth. The people, animals, and plants had long been waiting for it after a long spell of drought. Tayo's thirst for mother and mother-love was temporarily soothed while the earth breathed under the cooling and moistening gift from the rainclouds.

Before Tayo left Night Swan, she said that those who fear changes and differences are fools, adding with an enigmatic air, "You don't have to understand what is happening. But remember this day. You will recognize it later. You are part of it now (Silko, 1977, p.100)." Now Tayo remembered it was more than a year before. Betonie was talking about changes, and the stiffness that would thwart the changes. The stiffness was a mark of victim-to-be for the witchery to jump upon and devour. Betonie had learned the ceremony from his grandmother, and his grandfather, Descheeny. Betonie had also collected what he needed for his new ceremonies. Even after being told all of Betonie's stories, Tayo was still left with his old obsessions. Betonie shook his head and said, "This has been going on for a longtime now. It's up to you. Don't let them stop you. Don't let them finish off this world (Silko, 1977, p.152)." Betonie now declares Tayo is bound firmly to the whole system of the world that was pitted against the destroyers.

Tayo went home with Betonie's words and the clear pattern of the mountains and the star formation on Betonie's sand painting, his words that there were no boundaries in the witchery manipulation. These things remained with him. Betonie claimed he had seen a mountain, spotted cattle, and a woman. The song describes how dangerous the journey would be, and though he returned to a long life and

happiness he should still have the last hoop to go through. It comes just after the passage of his going home. “The rainbow returned him to his / home, but it wasn’t over. / All kinds of evil were still on him (Silko, 1977, p.144).” The force of the story is here symbolized by the rainbow in the sand painting.

Tayo came back home from Betonie’s hogan. He wanted to seek Josiah’s cattle as soon as possible. Without Betonie’s ceremony, Tayo would not have wished to find the cattle at all. To him Betonie’s vision of a mountain, spotted cattle, and a woman now was a story he could feel happening. In Tayo’s healing, the effect and the fulfillment of the healing of a larger scale was included and it would not be easy because that depended on Tayo’s will to be healed, and, by it the restoration of the balance and harmony of the Universe. He would have to fight out his own battle. Even if he survived the war with the Japanese, it is not certain that he could make it this time. He had to struggle with the evil power far stronger than that, it was rampant all over the world, even in the Pueblo country. The veterans boozing around and aping the white man’s way should have displeased the mother corn.

In the song about the mythical twin brothers, Ma’see’wi and Ou’yu’ye’wi, their mother, Nau’ts’ity’i, the corn mother, was very angry about their fooling around with magic games neglecting the mother corn altar. She punished them as they deserved. The song ends like this:

So she took
the plants and grass from them
No baby animals were born.
She took the

rainclouds with her (Silko, 1977, pp.48-49).

The twin brothers' story corresponds to the rackets and rows in the bars in which Indian war veterans "spent all the checks trying to get back the good time (Silko, 1977, p.43)." They tried to take back the good time when they were treated as heroes. They had to buy back past dreams and curse the present. No wonder the Mother Earth got angry and drought came upon the people.

According to the Pueblo traditional story, the drought comes when they violated the balance and harmony by disrespect for the Mother Earth, and they have to ask forgiveness for the disturbance they had caused. In the song they noticed that the Mother was angry and decided to ask her forgiveness. When Tayo found himself thrusting the jagged end of a broken beer bottle into Emo's belly, the cunning plot of the witchery was already on all of them. Emo had rattled the teeth he had collected from the Japanese soldiers, and boasted declaring, "We blew all to hell. We should've dropped bombs on all of the rest and blown them off the face of the earth (Silko, 1977, p.61)." The witchery's design is well on its way to its destination to destroy the world, as well as all the races on the earth. In the song, Hummingbird took pity on the skinny, starving people, and created a big green fly according to the ritualistic process. Then Hummingbird and Fly spoke to their mother, who said, "You get old Buzzard to purify your town first (Silko, 1977, p.105)." The offering to Buzzard was not complete, because they had to offer tobacco. When Tayo sat talking to old Betonie, and going through his ceremony, the two messengers, Hummingbird and Fly, busily went back and forth trying to satisfy old Buzzard to

get help for the people in the mythic world.

The finishing touch of Betonie's ceremony was done by cutting the top of Tayo's head with a sharp flint. The song about a young man enchanted by a Coyote being comes parallel with the slow process of Tayo's ritual in front of the sand painting of dark mountain ranges and a wide overarching rainbow. Like the young man in the legend restored to human world, Tayo was on his way to be healed, and he came back from a dream to the reality. He was to understand the pattern of mountain ranges and the rainbow in the sand painting. After the cutting, Tayo stepped into the bear footprints and went through five hoops guided by Betonie's prayers. And now all Betonie could do was finished, but Tayo's healing was never to be easy. Tayo knew it had to go on. Yet he could feel the place where he was. The place became meaningful to him as he rode down the hill before dawn with Betonie and his assistant:

The mountain wind was cool; it smelled like springs hidden deep in mossy black stone. He could see no signs of what had been set loose upon the earth: the highways, the towns, even the fences were gone. This was the highest point on the earth: he could feel it (Silko, 1977, p.139).

The mountains on the sand painting indicated that he was related to all people in the community and to everything in the universe.

The Spirit of Mt. Taylor

The night Tayo and a woman he had met under the apricot in the mountain tree embraced each other, the stars that old Betonie explained to him in the sand painting were in the sky. Tayo met the woman when he went there to look for uncle Josiah's Mexican cattle. After asking him what he was doing, the woman invited him into her house. Tayo noticed that she wore a blanket that had "patterns of storm clouds in white and gray; black lightning scattered through brown wind (Silko, 1977, p.177)." She invited him to eat at her table and to sleep with her. It is described in a passage as one of the boldest and most delicate expressions of lovemaking ever written in English. It surpasses anything of its kind in that it combines the image of water, the most sacred source of life, and spiritual power of the mother image of a mythical scale.

He eased himself deeper within her and felt the warmth close around him like river sand, softly giving way under foot, then closing firmly around the ankle in cloudy warm water. But he did not get lost, and he smiled at her as she held his hips and pulled him closer. He let the motion carry him, and he could feel the momentum within, at first almost imperceptible, gathering in his belly. When it came, it was the edge of a steep riverbank crumbling under the downpour until suddenly it all broke loose and collapsed into itself (Silko, 1977, pp.180-181).

As Night Swan was the spirit of the rain, the woman who carried a blanket of

lightning pattern was the spirit of the mountain. Later he was told that her name was Ts'eh, the name connected with Ts'epina, Mt. Taylor, a sacred mountain for the Pueblos. The mountains hold rich sources of water. Tayo was in the arms of the loving earth, the loving mother.

The next day he saw in the distance what looked like Josiah's speckled cattle, and he recognized they had the butterfly brands and Auntie's brands on them. He noticed the unmistakable way they sped across the arroyos and clearings, not like cattle but like elks. He knew their nature and the direction they would go. He tried providing the best and only way for them to escape. He cut a wide hole in the tough barbed-wire fence which a greedy white rancher had built. He made it, and they also made the escape as he would find the following day. The cattle had driven themselves into the big-scale trap in Ts'eh's place. Tayo himself had a narrow escape after he was caught by two cowboys on the patrol. He was going to be sent to prison or hospital again. In effect, the mountain lion saved him, and the white-out of the snow that started to fall saved him, too, by enshrouding everything, burying the mountain lion's tracks, and perhaps all the signs of the fleeing cattle, even the gaping hole Tayo had cut in the fence. The hole would be lost hidden in the snow only to be discovered next spring. The earth, the animal, and the weather seemed to have helped Tayo to make the escape. The story Betonie prepared and Tayo listened was harkened by the spirits of the universe. He restored the cattle, while in the mythical world of the song, the balance of the universe was still threatened, and Tayo knew he was heavily involved in the whole process of endangered community. He pondered

on the white man's deceit and lies, and his struggle had just begun.

A legendary story about the witchery is wrought into a long poem which tells how the white people were invented as tools for the witchery to work, how they are weak and full of fear, and how they live away from all life. The lines give us vivid descriptions of their abnormality.

*Then they grow away from the earth
then they grow away from the sun
then they grow away from the plants and animals.
They see no life
When they look
they see only objects.
The world is a dead thing for them
the trees and rivers are not alive
the mountains and stones are not alive.
The deer and bear are objects
They see no life (Silko, 1977, p.135).*

The witchery contest comes to a climax when a powerful witch proceeded and offered to tell the story of the destruction of the whole world. Her story was so powerful that nobody could stop it once it was told and set in motion. The scalp ceremony had healed Tayo from the ailments coming from the Japanese souls killed in the tropical jungle, while on a mythical level, "it satisfied the female giant who fed on the dreams of warriors (Silko, 1977, p.169)." But there was something else now. For the war veterans and for the community at large, the loss from a long time ago came back to them to torment them. Things were worse, not the same as they had been before the

war, because the veterans had seen everything, and felt sore about what tremendous things white people had made out of the land that had once belonged to the Native people. It gradually dawned to Tayo that it was not the white people who caused all the destruction. He saw things beyond that.

During the winter time, he stayed home and his dreams were replaced by warm deep caressing and lingering desire. He felt the presence of Ts'eh all through the night and all through the winter. After the winter snow, the gentle rain came, not the stifling, oppressive rain in the jungle. The fields became green, and the springs were alive with frogs and water insects. Tayo was happy to wake up at dawn and even enjoyed the rainy sunrise. He felt like this: "The mountain outdistanced their destruction, just as love had outdistanced death (Silko, 1977, p.219)." At that moment, Tayo felt himself close to Josiah and Rocky and realized they had always loved him. It was the "vitality locked deep in blood memory (Silko, 1977, p.220)." At the same time Tayo knew "the people were strong, and the fifth world endured, and nothing was ever lost as long as the love remained (Silko, 1977, p.220)." This shows that Tayo's healing in finding his identity in blood memory is coming back, and with it the sense of place and the sense of being in the place of the ancestors for the Native people is coming back, too, in spite of the invasion from outside. The witchery was receding far from him and the people. But there was more to be done to keep the balance strong and stable.

Hummingbird and Fly went down to the fourth world to ask their mother where they could get tobacco to offer to old Buzzard, and they were told to go ask Caterpillar.

Tayo remembered what old Betonie had said as warning or consolation: “One night or nine nights won’t do it any more.” and added, “This has been going on for a long long time now (Silko, 1977, p.152).” Hummingbird and Fly came to Caterpillar and asked for tobacco.

Caterpillar spread out
dry corn husks on the floor.
He rubbed his hands together
and tobacco fell into the corn husks.
Then he folded up the husks
and gave the tobacco to them (Silko, 1977, p.180).

Tobacco is ready now to be brought to Buzzard who will clean the town of the evil working there.

The next summer Tayo decided to go back to the mountain with the cattle, and found Ts’eh camped by the spring. A yellow spotted snake came out from a shallow wash to greet him and brought the message of the spirit world. She was there beside the spring with a blue shawl around her shoulders in the shade of willow trees. She seemed to have been waiting for him, and they were happy to be with each other again. She taught him many things about the plants and the colors of the flowers. Ts’eh taught him how to gather plants; leaves, roots, and seeds. She was telling Tayo how to keep the balance and harmony in nature, having all the useful plants in their proper places. They also watched the cattle grazing in the tall yellow rice grass. The cattle had stopped moving south. They watched the speckled cows dealing with

the yellow bull borrowed from Romero. Tayo's heart began to beat fast as "he could see Josiah's vision emerging, he could see the story taking form in bone and muscle (Silko, 1977, p.226)." Ts'eh pointed at a tall dark green plant. It was a plant whose flowers should bring light of the stars. She asked him to gather the seeds when the time came, because she might not be there at the right time for it. They lived in a cave like this:

She was with him again, a heartbeat unbroken where time subsided into dawn, and the sunset gave way to the stars, wheeling across the night. The breaking and crushing were gone, and the love pushed inside his chest, and when he cried now, it was because she loved him so much (Silko, 1977, p.227).

He was accepted by nature with love, and he loved nature and enjoyed her harmony restored. It also shows that nature has always loved the people as benignly as Mt. Taylor looking down on them.

Robert came to talk to Tayo about what the other people were thinking and talking about him, especially what Emo was up against him. Robert said, "He (Emo) has been talking about how you went crazy and are alone out here. He talks bullshit about caves and animals (Silko, 1977, p.228)." The position of the sun in the sky was delicate and transitional; it was drawing to the autumn layout. He felt her approaching departure. One day when they found a calf dead in the arroyo, Ts'eh said to warn him, "There are much worse things, you know. The destroyers: they work to see how much can be lost, how much can be forgotten. They destroy the

feeling people have for each other (Silko, 1977, p.229).” The she-elk they saw painted on the south face of sandstone was so beautiful, however faint the outlines and details had become. Her swollen belly carried a new life, and it enlivened the whole cliff. She said, “As long as you remember what you have seen, then nothing is gone. As long as you remember, it is part of this story we have together (Silko, 1977, p.231).”

She was crying before they parted. She was grieving over the violence of the struggle that was to come to him from the Destroyers. The story of the witchery is originally about the monsters in the Navajo old stories. That was the only ending of the story the Destroyers would understand. She said, “They have their stories about us — Indian people who are only marking time and waiting for the end. And they would end this story right here, with you fighting to your death alone in these hills (Silko, 1977, p.232).” She anticipated the coming of doctors from the hospital, the BIA police, and the old people from Laguna, all to take Tayo as the crazy person as Emo had made them believe him to be. That night they held each other fiercely in order to lock out the moaning voices of the dark whirl winds and the old nightmares, as if they could make “a place, remote and calm as the stars that lay across the sky (Silko, 1977, p.233).” They both knew that it was coming to end soon, and how to complete the story would depend on Tayo, as Betonie had predicted and Ts’eh had confirmed. Before they parted she told him to remember everything, and she would always be with him. The next day he started alone, first to the north and then took the road east to the Acoma boundary fence. He slept inside the culvert intending to

wait for some early driver who did not know him to pass before any Government vehicle started to work.

Tayo's Own Struggle

The last and most difficult stage came after he had spent the second summer with Ts'eh, the spirit woman, and parted from her. After spending a night in a roadside culvert, he got out and looked over the stretch of the tall yellow rice grass and the broken gray shale ridge for something moving that did not belong with the surrounding rocks and trees. He saw the windmill where he and Josiah chased the spotted cattle and where the gray mule died from eating a poison weed, and the valley full of caves rich with stories he had heard. Looking at the yellow sandstone of Enchanted Mesa smoky with blue before the dawn, he realized:

All things seemed to converge there: roads and wagon trails, canyons with springs and shrines, the memories of Josiah with his cattle; but the other was distinct and strong like the violet-flowered weed that killed the mule, and the black markings on the cliffs, deep caves along the valley the Spaniards followed their attack on Acoma. Yet at that moment in the sunrise, it was balancing day with night, summer months with the winter. The valley was enclosing this totality, like the mind holding all thoughts together in a single moment (Silko, 1977, p.257).

In all probability, Tayo had been betrayed by his old friends, Harley and Leroy, who welcomed him into their car to drive to anywhere they liked. But on the way Tayo had a strange sense of loss and weakness in him, and then “he knew that they were not friends but had turned against him, and the knowledge left him hollow and dry inside, like the locust’s shell (Silko, 1977, p.242).” He left the car. He ran from them, and he came to Cebolleta, a place with the history and remains of uranium mining site. He tasted the bitter water from the trough beside the mine shaft. Did the uranium make it taste bitter? He remembered the story about the night when the first atomic bomb flashed and detonated at Trinity Site three hundred miles to the southeast. His Grandma shook her head slowly when she said, “Now I only wonder why, grandson. Why did they make a thing like that (Silko, 1977, p.245)?” It was the land that the Government took from Cochiti Pueblo. The Destroyers have no boundaries and no end to their designs. Tayo had come right into that region.

--- he had arrived at the point of convergence where the fate of all living things, and even the earth, had been laid. From the jungles of his dreaming he recognized why the Japanese voices had merged with Laguna voices, with Josiah’s voice and Rocky’s voice; the lines of cultures and worlds were drawn in flat dark lines one fine light sand, converging in the middle of witchery’s final ceremonial sand painting (Silko, 1977, p.246).

Yes, it was witchery’s story that was out there, uniting the fate of all the human beings on earth by a circle of death. That was why the people in the cities twelve

thousand miles away became victims of the Destroyers. Tayo was now keenly aware of the interrelatedness of his fate and that of his people and all the human beings. He felt relieved to see the final pattern, the way the stories fit together. All the stories were to become one that was still being told, and he was in the middle of it.

He had taken the screwdriver he had found in their pick-up truck when he escaped from them. The last of the atrocities was to be enacted right before his eyes. He was destined to witness it. Indeed, there seemed to be no way the Destroyers could lose, because Emo, Pinkie and Leroy had caught Harley as a surrogate victim to be lynched there at the place where once the magical mineral of yellow uranium turned to the tool of the evil. Harley had failed them because he could not take Tayo to them. Anyway they had to have their victim and a corpse. Tayo heard Harley cry, scream, and groan while they laughed. Tayo was about to jump out many times from behind the boulders between which he was hiding. He closed his fingers around the screwdriver and squeezed it ready and anxious to drive it into Emo's crown. When he understood Harley had bargained knowing how it would end, Tayo felt like this:

He was certain his own sanity would be destroyed if he did not stop them and all the suffering and dying they caused -- the people incinerated and exploded, and little children asleep on streets outside Gallup bars. He was not strong enough to stand by and watch any more. He would rather die himself (Silko, 1977, p.252).

The witchery had almost ended the story according to its plan, but Tayo

moved back into the shadows. He had almost jammed the screwdriver into Emo's skull. It was exactly what the witchery had wanted, but it did not happen. It had been a close call, and "Their deadly ritual for the autumn solstice (sic) would have been completed by him (Silko, 1977, p.253)." Tayo would have become another victim of the witchery; a drunk Indian for the Army doctors, another case to indicate white people's superiority, and another source of grumble to blame liquor. It did not happen. He saw the stars existing beyond memory and going on until the fifth world ends, then maybe beyond, exactly as they were painted on the old war shield and in Betonie's sand painting. He had arrived at a convergence of patterns. The plot of the witchery failed in mid-motion just like the Arrowboy in the song could not completely transform himself into a wolf. Old Buzzard said okay to purifying the town, so that everything was straight again after all the ck'o'yo magic. Of course there was a warning and admonition:

"Stay out of trouble
 from now on.
 It isn't very easy
 to fix up things again.
 Remember that
 next time
 some ck'o'yo magician
 comes to town (Silko, 1977, p.256)."

The story of the witchery was so powerful that Tayo felt he could hardly resist it, but he made it. Though he felt dizzy to think of the "countermotions to suck in a great

spiral, swallowing the universe endlessly into the black mouth (Silko, 1977, p.247),” he contemplated on the pattern of the stars that night that urged him to keep the story safe from the Destroyers.

Tayo received the ceremony at home presided by Ku’oosh, and he was accepted as a member of the community. All the elders heard Tayo’s stories and they realized that Tayo was now released from his struggle and thus cured. The ceremony strengthened the stories as they have always done with the new stories with new perspectives for the people. He was now admitted as a member of the community. What the ceremony in the community means is sung in the song following the passage:

They unraveled
the dead skin
Coyote threw
on him.

They cut it up
bundle by bundle.
Every evil
which entangled him
was cut
to pieces (Silko, 1977, p.258).

But the reader knows as Tayo did that the story has never ended. The bodies of Harley and Leroy were found below the road off Paguate Hill, dismembered beyond recognition, as if they had died at Wake Island or Iwo Jima, and the honor guard

fired the salute, and the coffins were covered with big flags. Pinkie was also killed by Emo. But Emo was sent to California instead of jail, because the FBI wanted to call it an accident. After all, Tayo persisted, and was permitted into his family as well as into his community not as a marginal member but as an equal. He would go back to the mountain now to gather the seeds of the plants which Ts'eh had asked him to. "The plants would grow there like the story, strong and translucent as the stars (Silko, 1977, p.254)." The flowers will provide the light for the future and future generations, and even if the witchery has only stiffened and has come back on itself just now, the plants would give someone like Tayo courage and guidance as beacon light. It will form a rainbow across time to convey the strength of the story to the future generations.

CHAPTER 4

STORYTELLING

Silko and Storytelling

Silko was brought up in a Laguna Pueblo family, and the Laguna Pueblo community has a strong tradition of storytelling. It is not just an accident that she has become the kind of writer that she is, strongly based on the tradition of storytelling, and with a new perspective. Silko tells about the importance of the storytelling culture in her essay, "Interior and Exterior Landscapes: The Pueblo Migration Stories":

Thus stories about the Creation and the Emergence of human beings and animals into this world continue to be retold each year for four days and four nights during the winter solstice. The *hummah-hah* stories related events from the time long ago when human beings were still able to communicate with animals and other living things (Silko, 1996, p.31).

The stories are not limited to the traditional legends and myths of the community. She was brought up with her grandmother and grandaunts, who were great storytellers. The stories came from listening to them first hand. She enjoyed the stories, and she was an extremely keen and attentive listener. In listening to the stories told by anyone around her when she was a very little child, she was already

aware of the importance of the changes Aunt Susie or Aunt Alice made:

I know Aunt Susie and Aunt Alice would tell me stories they had told me before but with changes in details or descriptions. The story was the important thing and little changes here and there were really part of the story. There were even stories about the different versions of stories and how they imagined these differing versions came to be (Silko, 1981, p.227).

There are not only different versions but some versions which also include commentary and critical dimensions. Dennis Tedlock has made an important point in discussing Zuni stories which, he argues, include in the telling, not only just the stories, but a critique of or a commentary on those stories:

The teller is not merely repeating memorized words, nor is he or she merely giving a dramatic “oral interpretation” or “concert reading” of a fixed script. We are in the presence of a *performing art*, all right, but we are getting the *criticism* at the same time and from the same person. The interpreter does not merely play the parts but is the narrator and commentator as well. What we are hearing is the *hermeneutics* of the text of Kyaklo. At times we may hear direct quotations from that texts but they are embedded in a hermeneutics (Tedlock, 1983, p.70). [emphasis in original]

There is much difference between once-upon-a-time stories in the Western European literature and the stories that begin with *humma-hah*. As for the word *hummah-hah*, Silko explains:

The Laguna people
 always begin their stories
 with “*humma-hah*”:
 that means “long ago.”
 And the ones who are listening
 say “*aaaa-eh* (Silko, 1981, p.38).”

In the opening page of *Ceremony*, Ts’its’tsi’nako, Thought-Woman, is introduced as the original storyteller, and as Silko phrases it, she is the Creator of everything; and the author is to be the agent or interpreter of the whole story,

She is sitting in her room
 thinking of a story now

I’m telling you the story
 she is thinking (Silko, 1977, p.1).

The repetition of the phrase “it is not easy” or “it has not been very easy” uttered by various persons and spirits, among other expressions in *Ceremony*, can be considered as comments on the whole story or the stories included within it. Quite ironically, even Auntie uses the same phrase after all the stories about the deaths of the veterans were told:

— she (Auntie) remarked to old Grandma, dozing beside her stove

with the dial turned all the way to HIGH, and to Tayo who was oiling his hunting boots; “I tell them, ‘It isn’t easy. It never has been easy,’ I say (Silko, 1977, p.252).”

Auntie’s comment reverberates in the room and seems to conclude the story in her own way.

Silko explains how she became a writer. She chose to be a writer with the background of the storytellers’ tradition one on hand, and on the other, she realized a possibility of articulating her ideas with the purpose of subverting the institutional power of the mainstream society. After attending three semesters in law school at the University of New Mexico, Silko gave up the career of a lawyer. She says, “I decided the only way to seek justice was through the power of the stories (Silko, 1996, p.20).” That proved to be the right decision, for she was (and is) keenly aware of the fact that “human identity, imagination and storytelling were inextricably linked to the land, to Mother Earth, just as the spider’s web radiate from the center of the web (Silko, 1996, p.21).” Since she started writing poems, novels, and essays, she has written to subvert the Euro-American colonizing powers that have been there for centuries, and the crucial point of the struggle on the part of the American Native peoples including Pueblos was the loss of land. Silko’s writing subverts, instead of confronting politically, the government, colonialism, and the global invasion of outside powers with the force of storytelling.

As old-time people always say, stories remembered give them strength to live.

When Silko herself felt uncomfortable about being treated as half-breed by the white tourists wanting to get pictures of Pueblo children who excluded her because she looked different, she remembered this. Stories comforted her, and she always depended on spirit-beings told in the stories of the people's and of her own adventures. Kochininako, Yellow Woman, is one of Silko's favorite characters, and all the people in the Pueblo culture, loved the story of Yellow Woman. Kochininako, known as Yellow Woman, is beautiful for her courage and her achievement of victory in restoring the community not through violence and destruction but through her sensuality and love. She accepted outsiders as lovers, thus making links with outside world, and brought something back to the community.

In Silko's short story, "Yellow Woman," the continuum of the oral tradition is illustrated when we compare her story with the other versions of Yellow Woman stories. We can see how the traditional abduction tales of Yellow Woman are transformed into a new story in the contemporary milieus with pick-up trucks, school education, and even Jell-O. Yet Silko's heroine can still tell us one more version of the Yellow Woman story by choosing the identity of the Yellow Woman character; that means, as A. LaVonne Ruoff argues:

Silko vividly illustrate the influence of these stories on the imagination of a Modern Pueblo woman and the usefulness of the genre for explaining why this woman, and generations of women before her, would suddenly disappear with a stranger, only to return later with a story about being kidnapped (Ruoff, in [ed.] Graulich, 1993, p.72).

When we compare Silko's short story, "Yellow Woman," with the traditional versions of Yellow Woman story recorded by a white anthropologist, Franz Boas, we can see the difference first in the attitude of dealing with the texts and then in their effects on the audience/readers. Boas and his assistants recorded the versions of the story, and then translated them into English meticulously word by word, and then went on making abstracts of the group of stories. The one titled "Yellow-Woman and Whirlwind-man" runs as follows:

Yellow-Woman and Whirlwind-man

Long ago. — Eh. — There in the northwest, long ago | Yellow-Woman lived. There were four of them. At that time they always | made clothing. They made also open-work stocking — and painted them like flowers; and women's belt (5) they also made and painted them like flowers. Then was exhausted the water | for drinking. After a while said | Yellow-Woman to her sisters, "Let me go and draw water," said she, | "there at the Yellow Spring down north," said Yellow-Woman. | Then her sisters said, "Go," they said. (10) Then she stood up. She took a jar and also a ring she took | and she went up outside and climbed down northward. Northward she went. | After a while there in the north she arrived below at the spring. There | she sat down. Then suddenly she looked westward. She saw | Whirlwind-Man. He came from the west. He was very (15) nice. His whole body was painted with a moon. Yellow, | blue, red and white was painted the Whirlwind- | Man. Then he arrived in the east. He said, "Are you here, | Yellow-Woman?" said he. "Yes," said Yellow-Woman. "Did you already come | here?" said he to her. "Yes," said she. "Maybe (20) you want something, " she said to him. "Yes," said he. It is

this, | I came for you, “ said he. “Behold, I shall carry you to my house,” said | Whirlwind-Man. “Where shall I put this, my jar?” | said she. Then said he, “Put it down here and turn it over,” said he. (1) Then again said Yellow-Woman, “I cannot | go with you,” said she. “Indeed?” said | Whirlwind-Man. “If you do not go with me, | I shall kill you down here,” said he (Boas, 1928, p.118)

The abstract for this part runs like this:

Four sisters are making decorated clothing. Yellow-Woman goes to draw water. She meets Whirlwind-Man who threatens to kill her if she does not go with him (Boas, 1928, p.260).

We can see the tedious redundancy of the written words that appear on the page, not spoken and heard, and at the same time the bluntness of the abstract for it, which will petrify the reader, who has expected to enjoy some kind of a story.

For Silko, and for Laguna people, this kind of recording is a dead story captured and pinned down as a specimen. Native American stories are alive and they are meant to go on and on. Each time the story is told it is not the same. It is a new story in that it is told with a new perspective. Stories are always alive with the interaction between the storyteller and the audience. They always connect the past events with the present and future, and by connecting events and experiences, stories come to have a power to heal the individuals and to foster a sense of community. Paula Gunn Allen says: “The oral tradition is more than a record of a people’s culture. It is the creative source of their collective and individual selves (Allen, in [ed.] Graulich, 1993, p.85).” It is exactly for that reason that some

old-timers resist having their storytelling recorded or video-taped. The story would be dead if it was recorded in that way. They think if the listeners, whether Natives or non-Natives, do not listen and remember from them, the stories are meant to end. Why make such a foolish and outrageous attempt as to record the stories? This idea of recording belongs to the non-Natives.

Silko says, “a good story was a story that would last long enough at least. It was one that has all kinds of details and gestures (Arnold, 2000, p.16).” For a story to be long enough implies that the listeners expect the storyteller to act out the stories with facial expressions, gestures and differentiated tones. *Ceremony* includes songs or chants in verse based on Laguna or Keresan myths and legends, which convey the atmosphere of expansion and added narratives of the story. They also give the story a mythical dimension. By dint of the interaction between narratives and songs the whole story gains a new perspective. It is presented as an old story conceived by Thought Woman, and told by the author/storyteller Silko in a new way. The audience/readers are expected to receive it, as an old story told many times again, and are sure to agree with old Grandma who says in the end of *Ceremony*, sighing, “It seems like I already heard these stories before --- only thing is, the names sound different (Silko, 1977, p.260).” Old Grandma knows very well from what had happened before what would happen now or in the future, for the old stories are always alive. Of course, *Ceremony* in its entirety is far from being the copy of an old story about something past. It is told in different perspectives, and the multiplicity of dimension incorporated in it keeps the story going. It is not the

creating of a new story but the continuity of the story or stories that makes the storytelling revive and go on. Storytellers cooperate with the audience to keep the stories alive in the community.

In *Storyteller*, “Yellow Woman” is followed by several stories, or versions based on the same theme of abduction of Kochininako by outsiders which are titled Cottonwood Part One (Story of Sun Horse), Cottonwood Part Two (Buffalo Man Story), Aunt Alice’s story of Kochininako and Estrucuyu, and a poem titled “STORYTELLING”. These are all different versions that stemmed from the legendary story of Kochininako. In the last one that reportedly took place in 1967, it seems that it happened to be the males that were kidnapped. The diversions show how wide the range of creativity inherent to the story itself is, and the vitality of the community reflected in it is very clear. Bernard A. Hirsch says, “At this point in the telling the legend melds with contemporary reality, myth enters experience, as we are told in the story of Kochininako and Estrucuyu that the heart of the monster landed “right over here / near the river / between Laguna and Paguete / where the road turns to go / by the railroad tracks / right around / from John Paisona’s place — / that big rock there / looks just like a heart / . . . and that’s why / it is called / Yash’ka / which means ‘heart’ (Hirsch, [ed.] Graulich, 1993, pp.174-5)” Silko’s rendering of Yellow Woman story into her short story, “Yellow Woman,” is a good example of how the story can get a new dimension in the contemporary experience in a particular place in the community (the river), and by it acquire a new meaning to the present listener/reader.

According to Dennis Tedlock, “though the phenomenologists and structuralists quote their texts, removing words from context and even daring to insert their own *italics* [emphasis Tedlock’s], the storyteller-interpreter does not do such things. He does not merely quote or paraphrase the text but may even *improve* upon it, describe a scene that it does not describe, or answer a question that it does not answer (Tedlock, 1983, p.70).” That is exactly what Silko is doing in *Storyteller* when she puts in information about the storyteller, Aunt Susie, before she starts retelling the story Aunt Susie had told her:

This is the way Aunt Susie told the story.
 She had certain phrases, certain distinctive words
 she used in her telling.
 I write when I still hear
 her voice as she tells the story.
 People are sometimes surprised
 at her vocabulary, but she was
 a brilliant woman, a scholar
 of her own making
 who has cherished the Laguna stories
 all her life (Silko, 1981, p.7).

Silko was always around the adults talking in order to listen to them avidly, and at that time something was brewing inside her. She describes in the conversation with Roland Hinojosa what kind of community she was brought up in:

When someone said, “How are you doing?” they really expected the other person to really expect the other person to really *tell* them.

I don't know what it was about me, but I was real sly and I used to listen if adults were talking. And people would really go into these very detailed kind of wonderfully dramatized stories, and as a little girl I used to watch and watch and watch (Arnold, 2000, p.89).
[emphasis in original]

Silko also says that it is not enough to be aware of the narrative and of making a story in order to fully realize what storytelling is among the Laguna Pueblos. We have to be appreciative and delighted in narrative exchanges in the everyday life of the community. Her conversation with Kim Barnes includes this passage:

At Laguna, people will stand there and they'll tell you how they are doing. At Laguna, it's a way of interacting. It isn't like there's only one storyteller designated. That's not it at all. It's a whole way of being. When I say "storytelling," I don't just mean sitting down and telling a once-upon-a-time kind of story. I mean a whole way of seeing yourself, the people around you, your life, the place of your life in the bigger context, not just in terms of nature and location, but in terms of what has gone on before, what's happened to other people (Arnold, 2000, p.71).

The boulders and arroyos, even the trees, in the landscape do not simply stand there. They contain stories accumulated over a long time in which all the community life, past and present, are stored. The stories may reach far into the future, thus connecting the people across time and space.

Silko is from a community where stories are *told*, and not *written*. She writes in English, not in the Puebloan or Keresan languages. She mentions some

important points concerning the difference between telling and writing stories. She said to Kim Barnes:

Obviously, some things will be lost because you are going from one medium to another. And I use *translate* in the broadest sense. I don't mean translate from the Laguna Pueblo language to English, I mean the feeling or the sense that language is being used orally. So I play with the page and things that you could do on the page, and repetitions (Arnold, 2000, p.71). [emphasis in original]

Repetitions may look tedious and redundant, but Silko asserts that it is necessary in the actual telling. What she does on the page is “using different kinds of spacing or indentations or even italics so that the reader can sense, say, that the tone of the voice has changed. If you were hearing a story, the speed would increase at certain points (Arnold, 2000, p.72).” In *Ceremony*, for example, there is a passage in which Tayo is looking back at the bridge in Gallup on his way to Betonie's Hogan. Remembering how Rocky made a wish of his safe return on the little bridge in a park in San Diego, he now wishes a safe return from the visit to a strange medicine man. There is a wide space between the next sentence, “What kind of medicine man lives in a place like that, in the foothills north of the Ceremonial Grounds (Silko, 1977, p.116)?” Auntie wanted to know that. This space indicates Tayo's remembrance of his beloved cousin together with the possibility of his own imminent death, and Auntie's ominous question before he left home. Silko uses the spacing to get psychological effects and to make up for the effects of the change in tone or measured silence. To

the question posed by Kim Barnes whether she does something to give her written pages the sense of storytellers, she answered, “Well, in *Ceremony*, the breaks would be the parts that ideally you would hear rather than read (Arnold, 2000, p.79).”

It is obvious that “songs” in *Ceremony* resound with oral legends and folktales in the Keresan tradition. Even the margins of the constituting lines of the verse delineate on the pages the pots, jars, and baskets, giving the reader the visual impressions of their culture. Even the narrative parts written in prose sometimes ring with music and rhythm of a chant. Among many passages to exemplify this are the following two:

He woke up crying. He had dreamed Josiah had been hugging him close the way he had when Tayo was a child, and in the dream he smelled Josiah’s smell — horses, woodsmoke, and sweat — the smell he had forgotten until the dream; and he was overcome with all the love there was. He cried because he had to wake up to what was left: the dim room, empty beds, and the March dust storm rattling the tin on the roof. He lay there with the feeling that there was no place left for him; he would find no peace in that house where the silence and the emptiness echoes the loss. He wanted to go back to the hospital. Right away. He had to get back where he could merge with the walls and the ceiling, shimmering white, remote from everything (Silko, 1977, p.128).

In this paragraph, we can hear his breath as a rhythm of his thought loaded with grief for the lost love, and his heaving sighs unbearably longing for the lost.

It was a warm night and he wandered for a long time in the alleys

behind the houses, where the dogs barked when he reached into the tin cans. He ate as he made his way back to the arroyo, chewing the soft bone cartilage of pork ribs he found. He saved the bones and sucked them until he went to sleep, in the tamarics and willows. Late in the night he heard voices, men stumbling and falling down the steep crumbling bank into the arroyo, and he could hear bottles rattle together and the sound of corks being pulled from the bottles (Silko, 1977, pp.112-3).

The reader can catch the pulse of the street of Gallup half asleep, in which a deserted child is threading through. Surrounded by the noises of the untidy and slovenly life, the child persistently and covertly picks his way in his effort to survive, sturdy and patient as an animal. All these come to the reader alive by the narrative force of the author.

Vine Deloria, Jr. argues in his book, *God Is Red: A Native View of Religion*, that while the American Indians are concerned with the philosophical problem of space, the Western European immigrants are concerned with that of time:

The very essence of European identity involves the assumption that time proceeds in a linear fashion; further it assumes that at a particular point in the unraveling of the sequence, the peoples of Western Europe became the guardians of the world (Deloria, 1992, pp.62-63).

The linearity of time is a philosophical issue, but as Vine Deloria clearly states, it has brought a far greater impact on the political status of indigenous peoples, when it was used as a rhetoric of Manifest Destiny. The Euro-Americans took the

land in the name of God to deprive the Natives as savages and heathen of the land of their ancestors. The Christian view of time is present in the very concept of their history, evolution, and hypotheses to many of their philosophical theories. Indigenous cultures never accepted the notion that time is linear and it should converge at a certain point, in other words, it has a definite beginning and an end. Natives consider time as cyclical and recurrent like seasons of the year. They consider the dead are always there and alive in the memory of the people, and the land remembers everything as the keeper of memory. The past is not past because the wounds and damage done are just here, not gone. The people who died is not gone; they come back and are around to watch and protect their offsprings. In the conversation with Ray Gonzales, Silko refers to the practice of Laguna people in their daily life like this:

“When someone died, they still referred to Joe’s store or Ray’s horse, and he’d be long gone. This is a feeling that no one ever left. At the family table in Laguna, little pinches of food are taken and put in this little jar for all of the family members who are around but are gone. It’s like a spirit world or dreamtime or spirit time. No one who ever lived was lost or gone forever (Arnold, 2000, p.102).

It is quite natural for a storyteller who is going to tell a story to ask one of the audience, perhaps the smallest child, to open the front door so that old people who are not there might come in and listen and watch, and they may bring in some gifts.

In writing *Almanac of the Dead*, Silko intended to subvert consciously the

white people's concept of time and wide range of invasive, destructive effects on the colonized peoples all stemming from the presumptuous concept of time as being linear. Silko says to her interviewer, Ray Gonzales:

I was doing it to destroy any kind of sense of linearity. It's done in a way that narrative can have a narrative within a narrative, and where past / present / future can really be experienced. It is actually the way in which a lot of tribal people see and measure time — past, present, and future at once (Arnold, 2000, p.102).

Silko relied on her experience of hearing stories that included narratives with inner narratives from the storytellers before her. She also resists the rules about the forms of novel set by Western ideas of literary genres. She declares, "The Western European rules about the form of novel don't apply. Hell, the nice thing about the novel is that it's wide open. I decided I would go ahead and raise hell with linear time (Arnold, 2000, p.102)."

Silko's unconventional way of writing her works are not the hybridization of established genres, but are firmly founded on the literary tradition of Pueblo people. The poem on prefatory page in *Ceremony* shows that the structure of the novel is very inclusive.

Ts'its'tsi'nako, Thought-Woman,
is sitting in her room
and whatever she thinks about
appears.

She is sitting in her room
thinking of a story now

I'm telling you the story
she is thinking (Silko, 1977, p.1).

Ceremony's all inclusive structure allows the ancient songs and legends to inform of and warn against imminent events that are going to happen in the real world and invoke the past events that are meaningful in their continuing community. The legends do not lose the quality and are presented in various levels of the reality. The idea that nothing is lost and the dead are not lost so long as they are remembered is the primary message that Silko intended to convey in *Ceremony* as well as in other works. Indeed Tayo's healing mainly depended on it.

Storytelling and Community

The back cover of Silko's *Storyteller* carries her own words about the stories and the strength they give to her people and tribal people generally:

I grew up at Laguna listening, and I hear the ancient stories, I hear them very clearly in the stories we are telling right now. Most important, I feel the power which the stories still have, to bring us together, especially when there is loss and grief (Silko, 1981, Back cover).

Jace Weaver cites this passage in his book, *That the People Might Live: Native American Literatures and Native American Community* (Weaver, 1997, pp.20-21) to illustrate how the indigenous people resisted the white colonialism which imposed social structures incompatible with the traditional culture and society, and tried to eliminate their identity at the same time. Thomas King declares in the introduction of his anthology, *All My Relations*:

A most important relationship in Native cultures is the relationship which humans share with each other, a relationship that is embodied within the idea of community. Community, in a Native sense, is not simply a place or group of people; rather it is, as novelist Louise Erdrich describes it, a place that has been “inhabited for generations,” where “the landscape becomes enlivened by a sense of group and family history (King, 1990, pp.xiii-xiv).”

We can see clearly the difference between what the land means to a people that have known it for centuries and what it means to newcomers who would easily get lost failing to recognize the pattern. Silko says the same thing in her collection of essays:

Human identity, imagination and storytelling were inextricably linked to the land, to Mother Earth, just as the strands of the spider's web radiate from the center of the web (Silko, 1996, p.21).

In Silko's idea of community, the land plays an essential part, and she compares the view of white people with that of the Natives concerning the landscape:

So long as the human consciousness remains *within* the hills, canyons, cliffs, and the plants, clouds, and sky, the term *landscape*, as it has entered the English language, is misleading. "A portion of territory the eye can comprehend in a single view" does not correctly describe the relationship between a human being and his or her surroundings (Silko, 1996, p.27). [emphasis in original]

When we use the word "landscape," it presupposes the viewer being outside, and shows no indication of inside involvement. This connotation makes Silko hesitate to use the word. She contrasts the Native view of landscape with that of the mainstream which sees it from outside or separates the viewer from the territory he or she surveys. The Natives see it from inside, including the viewer as part of it; for example, just like the boulder he or she stands on. In Silko's words, a giant boulder is not just a boulder significant for its size and shape but it has a story that has been

told by the people of the community. Here is a story about a boulder:

There is a giant sandstone boulder about a mile north of Old Laguna, on the road to Paguate. It is ten feet tall and twenty feet in circumference. When I was a child and we would pass this boulder driving to Paguate village, someone usually made reference to the story about Kochininako, Yellow Woman, and the Estrucuyo, a monstrous giant who nearly ate her (Silko, 1996, p.33).

Kochininako was rescued by her own cleverness and the Twin Brothers who came at her calling for help. After the brothers killed and cut up the giant, they threw his heart as far as they could. The giant boulder is the monster's heart which had landed beside the old trail to Paguate. People also tell about a wide deep arroyo near the King's Bar that has claimed many vehicles as victims. They tell even a very recent story added to it, with comment on it as well:

A few years ago, a Vietnam veteran's new red Volkswagen rolled backward into the arroyo while he was inside buying a six-pack of beer; the story of his loss joined the lively and large collection of stories already connected with that big arroyo (Silko, 1996, p.39).

Silko herself adds that all his combat money had gone to buy the new Volkswagen, though she does not know whether the veteran was consoled by the stories of the preceding losses in the arroyo. The story might have done some good to him even if he found his car a total wreck, and other people could learn a lot from it. It gives us

an example of what stories can do to the people in relation to the land.

For the white people, community is where they live side by side with certain groups, families, relatives, friends as neighbors. White people usually choose where to live not in terms of connection with the land but in terms of convenience and amenity combined with money. It is rather a matter of contingency rather than a traditionally passed down concept of the dwelling. The white people's society depends heavily on political and economical causes, not an inherent and inextricable links between people and land. For the Natives including Pueblos, stories function as links between past and present, and make people go on into the future, as Silko says:

These stories about goings-on, about what people are up to, give identity to a place. There are things about the river you can see with your own eyes, of course, but the whole identity of it, was established for me by the stories I'd heard, all the stories, all the stories about the old man who lost a team of horses in the quicksand at a certain point on the river (Arnold, 2000, p.12).

The stories console, warn, admonish, and sometimes urge or demand people to do something. According to Silko, "That's how you know, that's how you belong, that's how you know you belong, if the stories incorporate you into them. There have to be stories. It's stories that make this a community (Arnold, 2000, p.12)."

By community the Natives also imply an extended community or all inclusive community shared by animals, plants and inanimate things. Weaver is quite right

in saying:

When Natives are removed from their traditional lands, they are robbed of more than territory; they are deprived of numinous landscapes that are central to their faith and identity, lands populated by their relations, ancestors, animals and beings both physical and mythological. A kind of psychic homicide is committed (Weaver, 1997, p.38).

Silko's referring to the time when humans shared their language with animals and rocks illustrates this expansive community, and it is exemplified in many of her stories. Interrelationship and interdependency of all the things in the universe is underscored in the following passage:

The land, the sky, and all that is within them — includes human beings. Interrelationships in the Pueblo landscape are complex and fragile. The unpredictability of the weather, the aridity and harshness of much of the terrain in the high plateau country explain in large part the relentless attention the ancient Pueblo people gave to the sky and the earth around them. Survival depended upon harmony and cooperation not only among human beings, but also among all things — the animate and the less animate, since rocks and mountains were known on occasion to move (Silko, 1996, p.29).

In the Pueblo traditional tales, animals and insects play important roles, and even the inanimate things are treated as full-fledged characters. All these stories tell about how the people have lived and cooperated with other animate and

inanimate things on the earth. The stories vary from Creation and Migration tales down to everyday gossips. Thus in *Ceremony*, the frogs, snakes, hummingbirds, flies, dragonflies, and mountain lions achieve mythic stature in the life of the community in which people have lived for countless generations interacting with other beings around them. The snake as a messenger and harbinger of spring, the mountain lion as a helper of hunters, the frogs bringing rain or floods, and even the lightning-struck dead pine tree is sacred for Tayo. Fly and Hummingbird are messengers flying back and forth to the Mother in the world below and to Caterpillar for tobacco and finally to old Buzzard. They busy themselves for the good of everybody who is suffering in the community. Besides this story, Silko has another story about a fly in the Emergence story:

The people found the opening into the Fifth World too small to allow them or any of the small animals to escape. They had sent a fly out through the small hole to tell them if it was the world Mother Creator had promised (Silko, 1996, p.37).

After this, Silko continues to tell, the antelope and the badger had to enlarge the hole wide enough for all of them to get through. So these animals helped all the other beings in the design of Mother Creator.

The Spider, or Thought Woman, is the Creator who created and named everything in the universe together with her sisters, Nau'ts'ity'i and I'tcts'ity'i and they made everything appear. Spiderwoman was waiting for Sun Man to help him beat the Ck'o'yo magician, the Gambler. She alone knew the strategies to get the

better of this wicked magician, and by the help of her advice Sun Man could free his sons, the stormclouds, from their prison in the mountain. After that the people and all the animals and plants were blessed with rain. Tayo watched very carefully when a spider came out to drink from the spring:

The spider came out first. She drank from the edge of the pool, careful to keep the delicate eggs sacs on her abdomen out of the water. She retraced her path, leaving faint crisscrossing patterns in the fine yellow sand (Silko, 1977, p.94).

In his thought Tayo imagined the spider to be waiting in a certain location to help someone with the information she alone could give. The spider web is a symbol of interrelatedness of all the things in Mother Earth's creation for its spiral structure with a center where everything converges. Spider Woman sits in the center and watches all around.

The covenant between game animals and the people who have to take their lives is expressed in intricate rituals observed and exercised with respect and love toward the game they have taken; the pollen and cornmeal for the soul, the turquoise rings or delicate blue feathers on the antlers of the deer all express the people's appreciation and the wish for the return of the animals in the future. The Pueblo people know that they should not kill animals for no reason, or without respect for them. When Tayo lay in the dead leaves on the mountain, anticipating the first snowflakes, his hatred against the white people grew in him:

He lay there and hated them. Not for what they wanted to do with him, but for what they did to the earth with their machines, and to the animals with their packs of dogs and their guns. It happened again and again, and the people had to watch, unable to save or to protect any of the things that were so important to them. He ground his teeth together; there must be something he could do to still the vague, constant fear unraveling inside him: the earth and the animals might not understand that he was not one of them; he was not one of the destroyers (Silko, 1977, p.203).

In D'Arcy McNickle's *Wind from an Enemy Sky*, there is a passage expressing the Native's view of the river, the animals, and the plants which had been around for unremembered years. The tribal people reacted against the construction of the dam, feeling the nature's anger and pain as if their own. The passage runs like this:

A stream has its life. It starts from many springs and from the snows, it brings them all together. It flows over rocks, washing them smooth and round. It feeds small bushes and large trees. It provides for the needs of fish, muskrat and beaver, the kingfisher, and the little bugs that skip on the surface. Were the animals and the trees asked to give their consent to this death (McNickle, 1978, p.24)?

Tayo's uneasiness and fear of being one of the destroyers could not be appeased until he rested, and restored the sense of unity with the universe and the community he was in, and only then he began to feel love toward and from Josiah, Rocky, his dead mother and all the people and beings around him.

We see with Tayo that nothing in white people's cities or towns constitutes the community of the Natives in its true sense: "bright city lights and loud music, the soft sweet food and the cars — all these things had been stolen, torn out of the Indian land: raw living materials for their ck'o'yo manipulation (Silko, 1977, p.204)." Silko's symbolism is climaxed by her using as metaphor the hollow dead seed; she says ; "And what little still remained to white people was shriveled like a seed hoarded too long, shrunken past its time, and split open now, to expose a fragile, pale leaf stem, perfectly formed and dead (Silko, 1977, p.204)." As is shown in this passage, white people have no interest in and receptivity to life and living with other beings except dead objects. This is the death of community if ever they had one.

Finally, the destructive power of the white culture culminates in uranium mining and the construction of the atomic bombs. The Destroyers' design to cut and separate people and peoples, according to the author of the *Ceremony*, is working in multiple dimensions. Here in the remains of open-pit uranium mines, at Los Alamos where the atom-bomb laboratories are situated, and at Trinity Site where the first atom-bomb was experimented, the ultimate design was started. It seems that the design had not been enough in "working for drought to sear the land, to kill the livestock, to stunt the corn plants and squash in the garden, leaving the people more and more vulnerable to the lies (Silko, 1977, p.249)." It had to go on and seek more victims. It is a great irony, Silko says, that the uranium had been found for its tremendous use within the territory of the people who most respected the earth and took pains to keep it in harmony and balance not only for themselves

but also for all their relations. Uranium in itself is beautiful and harmless, and it is part of the creation of Mother Earth. The stone is described like this: “The gray stone was streaked with powdery yellow uranium, bright and alive as pollen; veins of sooty black formed lines with the yellow, making mountain ranges and rivers across the stone (Silko, 1977, p.246).” But the design of the Destroyers put the beautiful rocks into a monstrous use. The atomic bombs coming out of these rocks with bright yellow pollen-like powder in them destroyed not only the people physically but the relationship and friendship between the peoples, which otherwise could have been saved. Tayo saw the witchery ranging as wide as this world and knew that his life, the life of the community, and the life of all the world are all linked together, and therefore it has to be defended against the witchery by the force of the healing ceremony.

Heroes in Western literature usually represent rugged individualism; on the other hand the culture heroes, including Kochininako in Keresan traditional stories, act in order to benefit the community by bringing some material resources or power to the people on their return. These gifts prove to be lasting contributions to the community’s survival and continuity. Thus the interdependency of the community and storyteller/writer is also different in two cultures, Native and non-Native. To be a storyteller in traditional societies of indigenous people is to be, according to Arnold Krupat, “one who participate in a traditionally sanctioned manner in *sustaining the community* (Krupat, 1989, pp.162-3).” [emphasis in original] But it is not enough. The relation between the storyteller and his or her community is

reciprocal, as Silko says, the story remembers the storyteller and sometimes it finds one to speak it out. In the conversation with Florence Boos, Silko talks about the time she was writing *Almanac of the Dead*:

Silko: . . . In writing *Almanac of the Dead*, I was forced to listen . . . I was visited by many ancestors . . . it was very hard. It changed me as a human being. I came to love solitude almost too much, and it was very frightening

Boos: Don't you ever fear that the presences of the dead might view critically something you wrote?

Silko: No, I've never been afraid. I know the voices of the storytellers, and I know that if you tell their truth and don't try to be self-serving, they aren't dangerous — in fact, they bring great protective power — *great protective power* (Arnold, 2000, p.139).
[emphasis in original]

Here Silko refers to the voices from the storytellers in the past exercising protective powers on the storyteller who is going to tell the stories concerning significant matters to the tribe and Native peoples in general so that the messages might be carried through. The spirits of the past storytellers demand the storyteller serve the community properly. Jace Weaver also argues how the community is deeply incorporated into a story or a work of art: “In putting forward the concept of communitism, however, I am not suggesting a facile notion of authorial intent. How a given work is received, consumed, appropriated, by Native community is part of the work itself (Weaver, 1997, p.45).”

Before and while Silko was writing *Ceremony*, she was feeling very sick, and

suffered from nausea. She remembered later that she thought that if I'd done with this work I'd feel better. She says, "Writing a novel was a ceremony for me to stay sane (Arnold, 2000, p.24)." So the community in the broadest sense, that is, the community with all the related people in it, that is, the generations of ancestors, and more generations to come in the future, uses the storyteller/author by urging and demanding, informing and assuring him or her of the importance of the role of the stories.

If the story finds no place in the community, if people no longer remember it, it has to end just there. If the community finds it viable in any way, it starts and goes on, no matter how long it has slept in oblivion. Since the storyteller is a keeper of the stories, he or she is very anxious about preserving the life of the stories not the name of the storyteller. We have an interesting story about an old storyteller in Silko's *Storyteller* titled "The Storyteller's Escape." The storyteller in it believed that she had kept all the good escape stories and her stories would help them a lot in the future. One day they had to leave the village because of the imminent raid of the enemies. On the way she found herself unable to keep up with the rest of the members. She sat in the shadow to rest, prepared to face the enemies alone and perhaps to be killed. Her sole fear was that nobody would tell the story of her escape when she died. When she saw a child look back toward her, she cried or thought to herself in her heart, "Don't wait / Go on without me! / Tell them I said that — / Tell them I'm too old too tired (Silko, 1981, p.250)." She was a storyteller through and through. After they found no enemies were coming, the

villagers came back, and to their surprise, they found the old storyteller right there to tell a story of her own escape. She was sure that that was the best story, because it carried the little boy who looked back, her last moment thought, “I die just to spit them (enemies) !” and, above all, her fear of not being able to tell the story to be remembered among her people. How she feared losing one story is expressed in her words, “This one’s the best one yet — too bad nobody may ever heard it (Silko, 1981, p.252).” We can understand that Silko herself is a storyteller like this old storyteller.

Among the Native writers and intellectuals, self criticism is being discussed about writing in the mainstream culture and having to live up to the principles and philosophy of the Euro-Americans. Paula Gunn Allen writes:

We had to ask ourselves whether we were really Indian. Maybe not, if we were writers. We had to ask if we were traitors to our Indianness. Maybe we were so assimilated, so un-Indian, that we were doing white folks’ work and didn’t realize it (Allen, 1989, p.4)!”

Allen’s concern is not without ground, for indigenous people and writers are afraid of inner colonization which is going on without being noticed. But, on the other hand, the most important thing here is to raise a voice and to be heard. D’Arcy McNickle has one of his protagonists say in *Wind from an Enemy Sky*, “A man by himself was nothing, a shout in the wind. But men together, each acting for each other and as one — even a strong wind from an enemy sky had to respect their

power (McNickle, 1978, p.197).” This is just what Silko is trying to do, not as a writer detached from her or his own culture and community like some or many of the Western writers. Silko and her writings convince us that the word *Indian writer* is not an oxymoron.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Keeping the Stories Alive

For a people and their sacred men and women, philosophers, and storytellers, their voices would not survive in the mainstream culture unless their successors are secured or their narratives are recorded in some way other than through human voice and body. N. Scott Momaday writes in his novel, *House Made of Dawn*, when Francisco tried to pass down the stories of their land and life on it to his twin grandsons by pointing at every ridge of the mountains as follows:

These things he told to his grandsons carefully, slowly and at length, because they were old and true, and they could be lost forever as easily as one generation is lost to the next, as easily as one old man might lose his voice, having spoken not enough or not at all (Momaday, 1966, p.173).

One reason the Native people resist material documentation of their oral tradition is that they thought and still think that the process of recording fossilizes the stories and deprives of the stories the possibilities of further transformation and accretive meanings by different perspectives. Stories have to be kept alive. They must not be left dead in the archives. They have to be told and heard, in order to encourage

people who live in the community to be involved with keeping balance and harmony in the universe.

Ceremony can be said to belong to the category of “authorless” text, and its author/storyteller, Leslie Marmon Silko, denies herself an egocentric posture of modern authors, but attempts to serve as a transmitter of a story rather than an originator. Dennis Tedlock relates (Tedlock, in ed., Kroeber, 1997, p.70) the tradition of storytelling among the Lagunas and their neighboring Southwestern tribes, “The teller is not merely repeating memorized words, nor is he or she merely giving a dramatic ‘oral’ interpretation or ‘concert reading’ of a fixed script. In short, there is a dialectical relationship between the text and its interpretation, and between the storyteller and the audience. Silko puts herself in a position of telling a story as old as the memory of the people, telling it in a traditional way, that is, remaking and remodeling it to fit into the new situation. Thought Woman claims that she tells the story out of the primal matrix of infinite circle of time repeating itself. There is no need to invent a new story, for it is already there, and it needs to be told with a new perspective of a new storyteller.

The Power of Story

Silko attended the law school in the University of New Mexico for three semesters and left it. After explaining the reason for it she adds:

My time in law school was not wasted; I had gained invaluable

insights into the power structure of mainstream society, and I continue to follow developments in the law to calculate prevailing political winds. It seems to me there is no better way to uncover the deepest values of culture than to observe the operation of that culture's system of justice (Silko, 1996, p.20).

Silko's knowledge she got there about the way of colonizing powers in the system of law gave her some ideas about how to cope with it, and how to counterbalance it as well. In *Storyteller*, Silko makes us conscious of the long history of storytelling, and she writes in the fly page of dedication: "This book is dedicated to the storytellers / as far back as memory goes and to the telling / which continues and through which they all live / and we with them (Silko, 1981, Dedication page).

In *Ceremony* Tayo becomes more and more conscious of the strength of the stories he has heard first from uncle Josiah and old Grandma and later from Ku'oosh and Betonie. He gets more involved in things happening around him at the same time. He chooses old stories about frogs and flies, and refuses to take the interpretations the white people make of treating animals and insects.

The war veterans from the World War II tell their own stories about killing the enemies with light-headed nostalgic flaunt, and their stories have nauseated Tayo. He has to confront their stories, which have been set by the witchery. Killing begets evil and leads to separation and animosity. Tayo's nausea comes from deep inside, and he needs the healing that can beat the witchery's story.

The new story that Betonie told Tayo in his healing ceremony is not about the white people victimizing Indians but it is about the witchery making all human

beings, Indian or non-Indian, its victims. The healing story has to be stronger than the witchery's story, and it has to be carried out by human spirit and body. Tayo made it, and it indicates that the story is alive. What was before his eyes was nothing but a destroyers' feast, and Harley was the sacrificial offering to the devil. Tayo was inculcated into not being involved in witchery's story, but his feeling worked the other way, as we can see in this passage, "But Tayo would not endure it any longer. He was certain his own sanity would be destroyed if he did not stop them and all the suffering and dying they caused --- (Silko, 1977, p.252)." Tayo is the most sensitive and the most involved witness to the scene. Why could he be sane? But something stopped him from stepping out into the inferno. It was not the fear of the result. He knew what was coming. It was his will to stick to the story, the strong, inherent belief in the spirit of the universe he lives in.

David L. Moore discusses the epistemology of the witness:

Silko leads the protagonist, along with the reader, to witness and hence undo oppositional evil, or evil as oppositionality itself. — In his panicked stream of consciousness, the narrative has built toward a violent confrontation, yet the momentum in that direction shifts abruptly amid the grisly details of "bleeding chunks of human skin. — An extra empty space on the page separates not only the paragraphs but the world-shaping choice between fighting and not fighting (Moore, in [eds.] Barnett, & Thorson, 1999 p.152).

To be a witness, Moore argues, is itself a sacrificial act as exemplified by the powerful silence of Arrowboy (in Silko's *Storyteller* and also in Hopi traditional legends). The

outwardly passive stance of a witness Tayo presents is carried on to *Almanac*, where we see the witness holding is different from voyeurism, and it represents the “crucial dynamic in the (anti)climax of *Ceremony* (Moore, in [eds.] Barnett & Thorson, 1999, p.152).”

Pueblo's Cosmology of All-Inclusiveness

In Silko's explanation of the history and culture of the Pueblos the inclusiveness or openness to receive outside people and culture is due to their tolerance to alien things. They have long been immune to difference and outside influx. Silko says:

— long before the arrival of the Spaniards in the Americas, the Pueblos and other indigenous communities knew that Mother Creator had had many children in faraway places. The ancient stories include all people of the earth, so when the Spaniards marched into Laguna in 1540, the inclination still was to *include* rather than to exclude the strangers, even though the people had heard frightening stories and rumors about the white men (Silko, 1996, p.103).

They need not to be told that some of the indigenous peoples now living in the Americas came crossing the Beringia landbridge hundreds of thousands of years ago. The story of the migration is ingrained in their blood, and that makes up their history and philosophy and leads them to their norms of behavior. They have a strong sense of the place where they were put according to the legends and myths as well as where

they came from.

Silko is part white, and as a child she had some experience as a mixedblood. That feeling in Silko is reflected in *Ceremony's* protagonist, Tayo, who has "hazel eyes," and looks different. Silko conveys her idea through Night Swan that fear of difference is the clue that witchery would try to grab at to make people separate, hate, and fight each other. The evil is not on one side or the other, for they are both fooled by the witchery. Silko's early childhood taught her about racism first hand. She is critical of not only racism but also of Christianity when she says:

Because our family was such a mixture of Indian, Mexican, and white, I was acutely aware of the inherent conflicts between Indian and white, old-time beliefs and Christianity. But from the start, I had no use for Christianity because the Christians made up such terrible lies about Indian people that it was clear to me they would lie about other matters also (Silko, 1996, p.17).

Racism and Christianity are equated, and together they constitute the character of Auntie, which is ironically the opposite of the Pueblo worldview. Auntie tries to isolate Tayo and his mother as heathen and immoral. The white people are described by the destroyers as "They will fear what they find / They will fear the people / They kill what they fear (Silko, 1977, p.136)." These lines in the song of witchcraft contest are in accordance with Harley's lynch by Emo and his comrades which Tayo witnessed. And Harley was the surrogate victim of Tayo. They hated Tayo as a mixedblood and a "Jap" lover.

A Beauty of the Spirit

The idea of beauty is very different between the culture of Native Americans and that of Euro-Americans. Among the Natives, beauty belongs to healthy person, and by health they mean balance and harmony in both body and spirit. Natives have lived in egalitarian communities in which food and other resources are shared so that no one person or group possesses more than another. Beauty, therefore, had and has nothing to do with the appearance, good looks, body, or costume. Beauty is indeed a standard of social status. Silko says, “In the old time Pueblo world, beauty was manifested in behavior and in one’s relationships with other living beings (Silko, 1996, p.65).” The appearance could not be separated from heart and soul of a person.

The traditional paradigm for representing beauty in Pueblo culture is Yellow Woman. In many variations, Yellow Woman is a strong legendary hero-character of coherent personality. She possesses courage, enterprising spirit, resourcefulness, and also outstanding sexuality. Ts’eh Montañó in *Ceremony* is a version of Yellow Woman, and she is a spirit of Pa’tó’ch, or Mt. Taylor. She healed Tayo back to his healthy self as Betonie had foretold. Kochininako or Yellow Woman in many tales of Keres oral tradition is “one who shatters the cultural paradigm or steps through or steps out (Arnold, 2000, p.77).” Silko interprets it in Pueblo way:

The attraction is symbolized by or typified by the kind of sexual

power that draws her to buffalo man, but the power which draws her to Buffalo Man is actually the human, the link, the animal and human world, those two being drawn together. It's just that power that's really operating, and the sexual nature of it is just a metaphor for that power (Arnold, 2000, p.77).

The abduction story of Yellow Woman ends up in bringing back something new to the community. Many of the traditional tales relate the benefits she brought back with her, be it twin sons, buffalo meat, or new ideas. The result of her liaison to a stranger signifies the receptivity of their culture and openness of their mind. Yellow Woman is a brave woman with a spirit that exemplifies Beauty in a Pueblo way.

Place and the Concept of Place

As a Native American, and especially as a Puebloan, Silko asserts the difference between the concept of white people and that of indigenous people about land and landscape. In Silko's opinion, the English word, "landscape" is misleading because it defines "A portion of territory the eye can comprehend in a single view (Silko, 1996, p.27)," And not only it falls far short of the Native view but also it is inappropriate. So Silko says, "This (the Western view and definition) assumes the viewer is somewhat *outside* or *separate from* the territory she or he surveys (Silko, 1996, p.27)." [emphasis in original] In Native conception, viewers are a part of the landscape or land (without -scape), and they are one of the constituents of the land, not an outstanding element which can disturb the other elements or generate order

among them. It is the sense of belonging that inspires the indigenous people when they stand before a landscape. Patricia Clark Smith and Paula Gunn Allen explains it more in detail:

For American Indians, the land encompasses butterfly and ant, man and woman, adobe wall and ground vine, trout beneath river water, rattler deep in his winter den, the North Star and the constellations, the flock of sandhill cranes flying too high to be seen against the sun. The land is Spider Woman's creation; it is the whole cosmos (Smith with Allen, in [ed.] Graulich, 1993, p.117).

The Spider Woman is Earth Mother, and she takes charge of everything that is on the earth from birth to death, from insects to human beings, from grass and plants to rocks and mountains. In Navajo oral tradition Grandmother Spider takes the form of Changing Woman. According to Lisa Aldred (Aldred, in *Native American Studies*, 14:1 p.23), "Changing Woman in Navajo religion gives everything we need and keeps everything on earth. Her body and parts of her body are actually situated on their land like "tongue mountain" and places to be considered her heart and lungs." They take their medicine from Earth Mother to cure themselves spiritually as well as physically. The ceremony is one of the means to communicate with Earth Mother. The Navajos and their medicine men and shamans are engaged in ritual dialogue with her, and transfer the knowledge or messages from Earth Mother and other spiritual beings. People and land have to hold continuing dialogues through rituals in order to secure balance and harmony in themselves and all around them.

Land is also presented in sexual terms. The sexual metaphor is often used for expressing some sort of relationship between people and land. It is more than a metaphor, for they can really feel Mother Earth and the Creator is mating when they have fog around them. The embrace of Mother Earth gives people power and courage as we can see how Ts'eh embraces Tayo in *Ceremony*.

Silko speaks about their culture and the feelings toward place in the conversation with Per Seyersted. To the question how she feels about the land she answered that “the place is more than just the place but gives us a kind of security (Arnold, 2000, p.2).” In a conversation with Larry Evers and Denny Carr, Silko mentions the close relationship of place and people in the community:

The stories about places give one the ideas or materials, at least, for fantasies and dreams or expectations. All of your expectations and feelings about the place are developed by what people say about it. And you are better prepared in turn for the stories that people tell and have always told about the place (Arnold, 2000, p.12).

Silko strongly affirms the relationship between the identity of the place and the identity of their community, when she says, “It is stories that make this a community. People tell those stories about you and your family or about others and they begin to create your identity (Arnold, 2000, p.12).

If we compare this Natives' view of land with the mainstream concept of land and place, land is sometimes recognized by white people physically, but in many cases

it is only abstractly calculated in terms of so many acres, so many bushels of crops, or so many tons of minerals and timber. Elliot West, a historian, describes in his essay the failure of the Euro-American expectation of conquering the land by measuring it:

The ordinances of 1785 and 1787 were in some ways terribly flawed. In one sense, the grid system was an illusion, one that presumed to impose a sameness on a magnificently diverse landscape. Surveyors would plot out the same legal checkerboard on mountains, canyons, prairies, pine barrens, gullies, deltas, plains, hummocks, and bogs. The rigidly linear brand of agriculture dictated by the survey was woefully unsuited to some regions, including much of the Far West (West, in [eds.] Milner et al.1994, p.125).

The Western concept of land is flawed not only in its application to the diversity of land but in the idea of abstraction itself. The author continues to add the ensuing problems of environmental calamities and its contradiction of favoring only land speculators in getting rich instead of favoring yeoman freeholders, Thomas Jefferson's cherished ideal. No wonder the land is crying with grief.

The same problematic mentality of the Euro-Americans is criticized in an essay by Paula Gunn Allen:

Westerners have for a long time discounted the importance of background. The earth herself, which is our most inclusive background, is dealt with summarily as a source of food, metals, water and profit, while the fact that she is the fundamental agent of all planetary life is blithely ignored (Allen, in ed. Graulich, 1993, p.107).

Silko is very keen about the political issues around the U.S.-Mexico borders. She speaks about the steel wall under construction there:

Now the U.S. government is building a steel wall twelve feet high that eventually will span the entire length of the Mexican border. The steel wall already spans four-mile sections of the border at Mexicali and Naco; and at Nogales, sixty miles south of Tucson, the steel wall is under construction (Silko, 1996, p.107).

Almanac of the Dead is all about the Native peoples' subversion against the federal power working to separate the peoples, especially the Native peoples who had lived without the borders for millennia and considered the borders to be against Mother Earth. The tribes living on both sides of the border just want to ignore it in accordance with the spirit of Mother Earth. The steel wall on the Mexican border glaringly reminds us of the "iron curtain," especially the one which had broken Berlin in half.

Sacredness of the Universe

In the conversation with Laura Coltelli, Silko pointed out three themes she treats in *Ceremony* and *Almanac of the Dead*:

Three pivotal themes already treated in *Ceremony* also shape the meaning and structure of *Almanac*: reverence for the earth; the spirit energy of a story, as we can see in the old Yupik woman and in fragmentary almanac of tribal narratives which have a living power that would bring all the tribal people to retake and redeem the American continent; then the destroyers whose witchery would turn upon itself, upon them. Tayo in *Ceremony* waits for this to happen at the uranium mine, the same site where in *Almanac* the Giant Stone Snake is pointing south (Arnold, 2000, p.131).

Tayo could cope with the destroyers' witchery with stories empowered by the spirits of the earth and the universe; the stars, the sun and the moon, the mountains, rocks, and even with the innocuous uranium lying in the earth's womb. Everything is sacred in that it is in charge of Mother Earth. Silko confesses that she has been encouraged and even demanded to listen to the ancient spirits when she was writing *Almanac*. She asserts that the audience has to have "the ear for the story and the eye for the pattern," that link peoples unknown to each other and events far apart in time and space, and she knows the spirits require her as a storyteller to listen to them.

Under the colonizing power of Euro-Americans, Native people have lost power to communicate with spiritual beings, and many Native thinkers and writers including Silko believe that their loss of communication with the spiritual powers is due to the loss of land and breaking down of the connection with land.

The mural painted by Silko between 1986 and 1987 stands in a Tucson street, and it resounds with all the Native voices across the world. The caption goes like this (in both Spanish and English):

The people are hungry. The people are cold.
 The rich have stolen the land.
 The rich have stolen freedom.
 The people demand justice. Otherwise, Revolution (Silko, 1996, p.149).

But more important than words is the snake in the painting. It is the spirit of the earth and it has skulls in her belly symbolizing a silent revolution. There will be no peace until there is justice for the earth and her children. There are more destroyers in *Almanac* and they are in subtler forms than those in *Ceremony*. Emo is developed into more sophisticated counterparts with more complicated schemes to tear down the world which should be kept in balance and harmony. Silko knows very well and tries to inform us what situation we are now in.

Calvin Martin relates the historical process in which the Micmacs (the easternmost tribe in Canada) gradually lost proper ways to deal with game and became indifferent to the rituals and violated taboos. Shamans have lost power under the onslaught of the Western culture. The people forgot about the angry earth

by their overkill of wildlife. These all, according to Martin's argument, has led to their despiritualization caused by the impact on the Indian-land relationship (Martin, *The William and Mary Quarterly 3rd Ser.*, Vol.31 Jan. 1974, p.3-26). The story of the Micmac tribe makes us think of a wholesale collapse of the earth's ecology. It reveals more than the environmentalists and scientists find and add to the endangered species lists, and we have to sense a deeper dimension of all there is to the so-called "environmental issues." The problem lies beyond the cost-benefit analysis of business administration, and even beyond what conservationists and preservationists might think of. Do we not have to ask ourselves if there is a river's right (for example, in the case of the Columbia River) to stay a river?

Silko says in her work, *Sacred Water*, that fresh-water lakes and springs have power, and beneath them lie the four worlds below this world (Silko, 1993, p.21), and also says, "The snake was a messenger who carried the prayers of the people to the Mother Creator below (Silko, 1993, p.24)." But, in the same book, she tells about the death of innocent plants in her pool, just as the white power rampant all around destroyed Natives and nature down to the uranium and plutonium contamination. Silko discovered that "only the night-blooming datura, jimson weed, sacred plant of the Pueblo priest, mighty hallucinogen and deadly poison, only the datura has the power to purify plutonium contamination (Silko, 1993, p.75)." Silko's message is stated: "Whatever may become of us human beings, the Earth will bloom with hyacinth purple and the white blossoms of the datura (Silko, 1993, p.76)." We human beings can only desecrate ourselves. However hard the earth's surface,

underground water, and rivers might be contaminated, the Mother Earth is inviolable.

The Rainbow across the Boundaries

Silko depicts the era of atomic bombs “a big slide into the big abyss,” and she remarks: “Going away to fight that war was a real big break, and it marked the end of a time. It isn’t just the end of time for Indian people, but marked an end of a time in life for everybody (Arnold, 2000, p.44).” We are told how vulnerable we are to the manipulation of evil powers. We have to know how much courage, energy, and patience are required to reject the mechanism of power structure and the seductive impetus of conquering and ruling the others. Everybody has a clue for the destroyers to grab at, and nobody is free from the moment of crisis when we forget about the other people, the other beings in the world. Silko also points out the “monsters” living in ourselves; “ — the reader gets to see what actually goes on in the minds of these Gunadeeyaha, these worshippers of suffering and destruction. And of course, these “monsters” are not so different from the rest of us (Arnold, 2000, p.132).”

Silko had to track down this monstrosity in man to the very source of human psychology. Otherwise, the community would never be in harmony, and the world would never achieve peace. She uses philosophy, religion, tradition, and worldview, and she weighs what the mainstream culture possesses and what it does not possess

in order to emphasize the strength of the Native people in establishing relationship to each other instead of separating each other. She values the respect for Mother Earth in relation to land among the Natives, she points out the problem of dualism in Western culture in various ways: cosmos-history, body-spirit, profane-sacred, and individual-society. We also recognize the linearity of time in Euro-American concept, and that precludes the idea of transition from life to death and vice versa. Oral tradition and Native literature counter the social science narratives and break the myth of science with the chaos of trickster narratives.

Silko thinks that the Indians continue to hold “more meaningful sense of the land even though they have long been removed from land than held by people who run Anaconda (Hirsch, in [ed.] Graulich, 1993, p.163),” and she also laughs at the people who are building the MX [missile system] for boasting of being the top specialists of the world (Barnes, in [ed.] Graulich, 1993, p.52). In fact they are only wisecrackers producing the weaponry for the murderers.

War cannot be stopped by a mere effort to eradicate the hostility between peoples. We have to positively resort to the power of story to penetrate into the human soul. It will be a long complicated process, and it will require a lot of patience to sustain the peace if ever achieved. The story in Native tradition is a rainbow that straddles distances both physical and psychological. It can reach every part of the world in every language peoples speak.

Jace Weaver says, “Publishing opportunities in most Native language are non-existent — in written literature the only real alternative is English if one wishes to

communicate across the community (Weaver, 1997, p.14).” It is a kind of ordeal for the Native writers to reorient their ideas and representation “from the paradigmatic world of oral tradition to the syntagmatic reality of written language (Weaver, 1997, p.14).” That task Silko has accomplished so successfully. Once it is written in English, there still lies another difficult hurdle to get over. English is a universal language, but many people in the world need translators to put it in their own languages. Translators put their utmost zeal and energy to take what there is in the text into their language through their own cultural filter. These rainbow builders: Natives writing in English, and translators in many languages, are both doing a great job of passing invaluable messages across the boundaries of culture.

Silko’s efforts as a Native writer/storyteller have been discussed, but here should be added a word for the translators. Their task is mainly done out of love as George Steiner, a critic and philosopher, states in his enlightening book, *Language and Silence*:

They offer to the original not an equivalence, for there can be none, but vital counterpoise, an echo, faithful yet autonomous, as we find in the dialogue of human love. An act of translation is an act of love. Where it fails, through immodesty or blurred perception, it reduces. Where it succeeds, it incarnates (Steiner, 1967, pp.270-271).

We should not forget the unselfish contribution of the mediators of cultures, as those translators devote themselves in strengthening the Spider Woman’s web.

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