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Leslie Marmon Silko and the Laguna oral tradition

Alma Jean Walker

Iowa State University

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Leslie Marmon Silko and the Laguna oral tradition

by

Alma Jean Walker

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of MASTER OF ARTS

Major: English

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Signatures have been redacted for privacy

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Ames, Iowa

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Alma Jean Walker
CHAPTER ONE.
INTRODUCTION

The literature of the American Indian is ritualistic. Its whole purpose is to establish a sense of unity between the individual and his surroundings, which include the landscape, the weather, history, legends and all other creatures. The very act of storytelling is a part of this process: sometimes its purpose is medicinal, to cure an illness; at the very least it is an act of discovery, a search for physic wholeness wherein nothing is left out.

Leslie Marmon Silko's first novel, aptly titled Ceremony, fits into this tradition. 1

MacShane's excerpt from the New York Times Book Review (1977) is indicative of the literary comments surrounding Leslie Silko's first novel, Ceremony (1977), and brings out some important points which must be considered when dealing with a Silko poem, short story, or novel: the sense of unity and the importance of landscape, history, and legends. Thus it is that any serious examination of Silko's literary works must begin with her heritage, a way of life passed on for generations by word of mouth in the form of stories. This rich oral tradition reveals the Native American sense of unity with the universe in all its forms, both animate and inanimate, and provides necessary links between the past and the present and insight into the future.

For Silko, the past has become the present and the present defines the future. As a storyteller, whether in verse or
prose, she continues the rich heritage of the Laguna oral tradition by rewriting the traditional tales in verse form, by incorporating traditional plots in contemporary settings, by placing traditional characters or outgrowths of those characters in contemporary situations. Her first novel, Ceremony (1977), gives excellent examples of all of the above. The poems in the novel retell the traditional drought stories of the Laguna people; the prose incorporates the traditional plots surrounding Arrow Youth and Yellow Woman in modern settings and several characters are updated versions of traditional characters: Tayo as Arrow Youth, Ts'eh as Yellow Woman, and Ts'eh's brother as Mountain Lion Man.

Silko writes what she knows and what she knows is the twentieth century life of a Native American raised in Laguna, New Mexico; it is a modern life with a view of the world structured by the history of Laguna and the stories of its oral tradition. She writes as only one who spent her formative years in Laguna could.

"The Laguna life [its landscape, weather, history, traditions, and legends] is part of Silko's own legacy. . . ." And it is this legacy upon which she calls when writing her own stories. Thus, it is that many of her best stories, whether prose or verse, arise from Laguna: "The Man to Send Rain Clouds," "Yellow Woman," "Coyote Holds a Full House in His Hand," "Toe'sh: A Coyote Story," the poems collected in
Leslie Silko offers today's readers a different perspective of the universe, but this perspective can only be utilized if it is unclouded. In order to uncloud it, the reader must be aware of the Silko heritage: the landscape of the Southwest, the pueblo Laguna, the history of the Queres and the Pueblo peoples and the stories of their beliefs, their fears, their joys, their sorrows, and their attempts to maintain the harmony within their universe. It is this that Leslie Silko incorporates into her literary works and it is this that allows her readers to understand another perspective on life.

Leslie Silko uses the ideas, characters, and events from this rich heritage, but three of the most frequent themes involve either the characters of Coyote or Yellow Woman or the constant adversary of the people of the Southwest, drought, which has become a sign of disharmony with the universe in countless oral stories. All three are as prevalent in her works as they are in the Laguna oral tradition and Laguna life. Due to their frequent use in a variety of poems, short stories, and her longer works, they would appear to be basic keys to the understanding of Leslie Silko's remembered past and oral tradition and her outlook or perspective on life. The two characters, Coyote and Yellow Woman, seem to have a particular fascination for the author and are present in the Laguna Woman, the novel Ceremony, and Storyteller.
majority of her stories. Silko draws upon these traditional characters and then continues their stories and hers into her time and place, the Southwest of the 1970s and 1980s.

Although Silko's works may be read as contemporary works with little regard for the traditional elements, these elements of her heritage are as much a part of her as she is of them. To understand the Laguna culture and oral tradition is to better understand a creative Southwestern writer called Leslie Marmon Silko and her own search for harmony and oneness with the universe. Leslie Silko is a storyteller and writing stories is her ceremony.
CHAPTER TWO.

THE NATIVE AMERICAN ORAL TRADITION

The oral tradition is that process by which the myths, legends, tales, and lore of a people are formulated, communicated, and preserved in language by word of mouth, as opposed to writing. Or it is a collection of such things.\(^1\)

To the uninitiated and unappreciative the oral tradition of Native Americans may appear as nothing more than a hodgepodge collection of fairy tales, ghost stories, and tall-tales having no real connection with life at all. The continuing oral tradition, however, is much more than this; to Native Americans it is life. Paula Allen (1975) states:

The tribes seek, through song, ceremony, legend, sacred stories (myths), and tales to embody, articulate, and share reality, to bring the isolated private self into harmony and balance with this reality, to verbalize the sense of the majesty and the reverent mystery of all things, and to actualize, in language, those truths of being and experience that give to humanity its greatest significance and dignity.

... every story, every song, every ceremony tells the Indian that he is part of a living whole, and that all parts of that whole are related to one another by virtue of their participation in the whole of being.\(^2\)

The oral tradition serves the important function of maintaining the people, permeating every aspect of the believing individual's existence. From a Native American's birth, the oral tradition provides instruction in the culture and beliefs of the people; transmits a sense of self, kinship, and tribal
identity; helps establish a close relationship with nature; unifies tribal history; explains ambiguities and natural phenomena; and teaches maintenance of the ways of the group. In short, the oral tradition provides the Native American with a way of life. It is necessary for the reader of contemporary fiction by such Native American authors as Leslie Silko to understand and appreciate their oral traditions and the role they play in each author's works.

The oral tradition carries out this vital function through five forms: song, ceremony, legend, myths (sacred stories), and tales, or one holistic form as all five are interrelated. Songs are closely related to the ceremony and, indeed, in many cases help to convey the message of the ceremony which is the ritualistic enactment of some relationship in the universe. Laguna poet Paula Allen explains: "The purpose of the ceremony is integration: the individual is integrated, fused with his fellows, the community of people is fused with that of other kingdoms, and this larger communal group with the worlds beyond this one."³

But it is the stories (legends, myths, and tales) of the oral tradition which have most often been recorded by ethnologists, anthropologists, and linguists and it is the stories which have come to the attention of folklorists and literary scholars. Technically speaking, the three types of stories are different but generally all three are placed together for study. A legend is a story which recounts an actual historical
event; a myth recounts a sacred event or story dealing with the religious views of the group and their relationship to the rest of the universe; and a tale generally involves a teaching situation such as the teaching of the duties of a young girl or boy, an explanation of some event or entertainment through a humorous tale. The three types of stories overlap and as stated above are generally viewed as a single body of stories.

Since the attention of folklorists and literary scholars has come to bear on these narratives, there has been a strong tendency to defend the stories or myths as bona fide literature. One of the ways of defining the myths as literature is to examine structure. Alan Dundes has published detailed studies of the various structures of most myths. His findings are that the structure of these stories follows a pattern from disequilibrium to equilibrium. A situation occurs at the beginning of a story wherein the harmony, the balance of things, is destroyed or shaken and the rest of the story or myth relates the efforts to restore this harmony.

Dundes reports that there are three basic structures in Native American myths. The first type is composed of two parts: loss or lack and loss liquidated. The following Malecite myth, "The Empounded Water," illustrates the two part structure.
Aglabem kept back all the water in the world so that rivers stopped flowing, and lakes dried up, and the people everywhere began dying of thirst. As a last resort, they sent a messenger to him to ask him to give the people water; but he refused, and gave the messenger only a drink from the water in which he washed. But this was not enough to satisfy even the thirst of one. Then the people began complaining, some saying, "I'm as dry as a fish," "I'm as dry as a frog," "I'm as dry as a turtle," "I'm as dry as a beaver," and the like, as they were on the verge of dying of thirst.

At last a great man was sent to Aglabem to beg him to release the water for the people. Aglabem refused, saying that he needed it himself to lie in. Then the messenger felled a tree, so that it fell on top of the monster and killed him. The body of this tree became the main river (St. John's River), and the branches became the tributary branches of the river, while the leaves became the ponds at the heads of these streams. As the waters flowed down to the villages of the people again, they plunged in to drink, and became transformed into the animals which they had likened themselves when formerly complaining of their thirst.

There is no longer a lack of water and the people also gain new animals to populate the earth.

The second type of structure involves four parts: the interdiction or warning, the violation, the consequences, and the attempted escape. Basically, such a story involves a warning against a certain action or activity which is ignored resulting in tragic consequences from which the perpetrator tries to escape. "The Origin of the Pleiades" (Onondaga, Iroquois) is one such story.

Once a party of Indians went through the woods towards a hunting ground which they had known for a long time. They traveled several days through very
wild country, going slowly and camping on the way. At last they reached the Beautiful Lake of gray rocks and the great forest trees. Fish swarmed in the waters, and deer came down from the hills to drink. On the hills and in the valleys were huge beech and chestnut trees, where there were squirrels and bears.

The chief of the party was Tracks-in-the-Water, and he halted the group on the shore of the lake to give thanks to the Great Spirit for the safe arrival at the hunting grounds. "Here we will build our lodges for the winter and may the Great Spirit send us plenty of game and health and peace."

Autumn passed. The lodges were built and hunting went well. The children began to dance and amuse themselves. They were getting lonesome, having nothing to do, so they went to a quiet spot by the lake to dance. They had done this a long time when one day a very old man came to them. They had never seen anyone like him before. He was dressed in white feathers and his hair shone like silver. He spoke to them, telling them they must stop dancing or evil would happen to them. [Interdiction] The children did not pay any attention to him. Day after day they danced. [Violation] Again and again he appeared, repeating his warning.

One of the children suggested a feast the next time they met to dance. When they returned home, they all asked their parents for food. "You will waste and spoil good food," said one. "You can eat at home as you should," said another. So they got nothing. But they met again and danced anyway. They would have liked to have eaten something to eat after each dance. Their stomachs were empty.

One day, as they danced, they found themselves rising little by little into the air. Their heads were light from hunger. They didn't know how all this happened. One said, "Don't look back, for something strange is happening." A woman, who saw them, called them back, but with no effect, for they continued to rise slowly above the earth. She ran for camp, but everyone rushed out with all
kinds of food. But the children did not return, even though their parents cried after them. [Consequences]

One, who did look back, became a falling star. [Attempted Escape] The others reached the sky. They are the Pleiades. Every falling star brings the story to mind, but the seven stars shine on—a band of dancing children. 6

The third type of structure, according to Dundes, is a joining of the first two, so that there are six parts: loss, loss liquidated, interdiction, violation, consequences, and attempted escape. Many of the culture hero tales are organized in this manner; the collection of Zuni stories about the Ahaiyute, the twins, is one such example. The stories are all interrelated and in all of them the twins ignore a warning in order to provide something for the people.

Long ago the people were living in Itiwana. Cloud Swallower stood in the east. He swallowed each cloud as it came up and there was a great drought. . . . [Lack] The Ahaiyute lived with their grandmother on Corn Mountain. One morning she said to them, "In the east there is a monster who eats the clouds; therefore there is no rain. You must not go there, he is dangerous." [Interdiction] "All right. . . ." Next day the Ahaiyute went to the east. [Violation] They heard someone speaking to them. It was Gopher coming out of his hole. Gopher said, "Wait a little." They stood still. "Where are you going?" "Oh, we are going to kill Cloud Swallower." "Come into this hole." The Ahaiyute went in. Gopher dug a hole deep down into the ground for those two boys. Gopher said, "Over there Cloud Swallower is asleep. I will make a way for you." He tunneled till his hole was directly over Cloud Swallower's heart. He began to gnaw his hair. Cloud Swallower started up. "No, wait, Grandfather. I want your hair for my nest." Gopher shaved a circle over his
heart and went back. He said to Ahaiyute, "I have shaved the hair over his heart; go through my hole and shoot him quickly where I have shaved. He will fall dead." They went. They drew their bow and shot him. . . .

They came back to Gopher and said to him, "Come and see if he is dead." Gopher went up and touched him. He called to them, "He is dead." The Ahaiyute came up. They said, "Now there will be rain. He will not eat the clouds anymore. . . . [Lack Liquidated]"*

This sequence continues through a series of connected myths until the needs of the people have been answered. Then the twins must face the consequences of their violations, the final one being their theft of thunder and lightning from the kiva (ceremonial chamber). Even though their grandmother warns them, they use the stolen instruments and produce rain. The rain causes a flood which kills their grandmother. [Consequences] When they realize that their grandmother is dead because of their actions, they stop and the rain ceases. After burying their grandmother the two leave, one going to Corn Mountain and the other to Twin Buttes (Shrines). [Escape]*

The structures outlined by Dundes are prevalent in many of the recorded myths and tales of Native Americans. Still another theory concerning the structure of these myths has been advanced by Joseph Campbell (1977) in his monomyth theory. Campbell believes that the structure of all myths is related back to the fact that there is one universal myth which has several basic characteristics. He sees this single myth and
all the variations based on it as the tale of a wanderer who is separated, initiated, and returns; the wanderer goes from the common world to a mysterious one and then back again.

There are several characteristics important to Campbell's theory:

1. The hero/god usually has a mysterious or divine birth and heritage.
3. There are usually prophecies of greatness concerning the hero/god.
4. As a child, the hero/god has mysterious and ambiguous powers.
5. The hero/god undertakes a journey wherein he encounters hardships, tests and trials with a rival or the powers of evil.
6. The results of this journey lead the people to a new state of awareness.
7. The hero/god usually dies on a high place; the death is miraculous and involves resurrection or transformation.
8. The story usually involves an element of fratricide or patricide.
9. The hero/god is often androgynous.

This particular structure is evident in the culture hero tales of the Native Americans. One example containing many of the above characteristics is the Bellacoola tale, "The Man Who Acted as the Sun." The numbers in brackets behind certain sentences refer to a specific characteristic in the list given above.

Once upon a time there lived a woman some distance up Bellacoola River. She refused the offer of marriage from the young men of the tribe, because she desired to marry the Sun. She left her village and went to seek the Sun. Finally
she reached his house and married the Sun. After she had been there one day, she had a child. [1,2] He grew very quickly, and on the second day of his life he was able to walk and to talk. [4] After a short time he said to his mother, "I should like to see your mother and your father"; and he began to cry, making his mother feel homesick. When the Sun saw that his wife felt downcast and that his son was longing to see his grandparents, he said, "You may return to the earth to see your parents. Descend along my eyelashes." His eyelashes were the rays of the Sun, which he extended down to his wife's home, where they lived with the woman's parents.

The boy was playing with the children of the village, who were teasing him, saying that he had no father. He began to cry and went to his mother, whom he asked for bow and arrows. His mother gave him what he requested. He went outside and began to shoot his arrows toward the sky. The first arrow struck the sky and stuck in it; the second arrow hit the notch of the first one; and thus he continued until a chain was formed, extending from the sky down to the place where he was standing. Then he ascended the chain. [5] He found the house of the Sun, which he entered. He told his father that the boys had been teasing him, and he asked him to let him carry the sun. But his father said, "You cannot do it. I carry many torches. Early in the morning and late in the evening I burn small torches, but at noon I burn the large ones." The boy insisted on his request. Then his father gave him the torches, warning him at the same time to observe carefully the instructions that he was giving him in regard to their use.

Early the next morning, the young man started on the course of the sun, carrying the torches. Soon he grew impatient and lighted all the torches at once. Then it grew very hot. The trees began to burn, and many animals jumped into the water to save themselves, but the water began to boil. Then his mother covered the people with her blanket and thus saved them. The animals hid under stones. . . . When the Sun saw what was happening, he said to his son, "Why do you do so? Do you think it is good that there are no people on the earth?"
The Sun took him and cast him down from the heavens, saying, "You shall be mink, and future generations of man shall hunt you." [6,7]

These then are two possible ways of examining Native American myths structurally. There is, however, another way of observing these tales and that is to group them according to predominant motif or theme. Stith Thompson's motif index (1966) lists prevailing motifs or themes found in the myths of the oral traditions of Native Americans. All variations of a motif or theme are listed under the predominant motif.

The basic motifs themselves are categorized in large groups such as mythological, animal, tabu, magic, return from the dead, marvel, ogre, deception, fortune, captive and fugitive, victory over the weak, unnatural cruelty, and sex motifs. Then each of these categories is broken down into more specific motifs. For example, in the animal motif section appear more restricted motifs such as mythical animals, helpful animals, and animal marriages. Under these subheadings the specific thematic motifs are given. If, for example, one looks at animal marriages, one might find this motif: woman marries dog. This motif could then be recognized in related stories. Two variations on this motif are given by Susan Feldmann's *The Storytelling Stone* (1971) in "The Dog Husband" and "The Girl Who Married a Dog."

The first story from the Quinault people goes as follows:
A long time ago, in a certain village there lived a young girl who had a dog of which she was very fond. She took the dog with her wherever she went; and at night, as was a common custom at that time with young girls, the dog slept at the foot of the bed. Every night he would change into human form and lie with the girl, and in the morning, before it was light, would turn back again into his dog shape: so no one knew anything about it. After a time she became pregnant; and when her parents found it out and knew that the dog was the cause, they were greatly ashamed, and, calling the people together, they tore down the house, put out all the fires, and moved away from the place, leaving the girl to die.

But Crow had pity on her, and, taking some coals, she placed them between two clamshells and told the girl secretly that after a time she would hear a crackling, and to go to the spot and she would find fire. So the girl was left alone, for the people had all gone a long way across the water. She sat still for a long time, listening for the crackling, and when she finally heard it she went to the place and found the fire as Crow had said.

Not long after this she gave birth to five dog pups, but as her father had killed the dog, her lover, she had to look after them by herself, and the only way she could live and care for them was to gather clams and other shellfish on the beach. There were four male pups and one female, and with the care their mother gave them, they grew very fast. Soon she noticed that whenever she went out, she heard a noise of singing and dancing, which seemed to come from the house, and she wondered greatly. Four times she heard the noise and wondered, and when, on going out again, she heard it for the fifth time, she took her clam-digger and stuck it in the sand, and put her clothes on it to make it look as if she were busy gathering clams. Then she stole back by a roundabout way, and creeping close to the house peeped in through a crack to see what the noise might be. There she saw four boys dancing and singing, and a little girl watching the place where the mother was supposed to be digging clams. The mother waited for a moment and watched, and then coming in she caught them in human
form, and scolded them, saying that they ought to have had that form in the first place, for on their account she had been brought to shame before the people. At this the children sat down and were ashamed. And the mother tore down the dog blankets which were hanging about, and threw them into the fire.

So they remained in human form after this; and as soon as they were old enough she made little bows and arrows for the boys, and taught them how to shoot birds, beginning with the wren, and working up to the largest. Then she taught them to make large bows and arrows, and how to shoot fur animals, and then larger game, up to the elk. And she made them bathe every day to try to get tamanous for catching whales, and after that they hunted the hair seal to make floats of its skin. And the mother made harpoons for them of Elk bone, and lines of twisted sinews and cedar, and at the end of the line she fastened the sealskin floats. And when everything was ready, the boys went out whaling and were very successful, and brought in so many whales that the whole beach stank with them.

Now, Crow noticed one day, from far across the water, a great smoke rising from where the old village had stood, and that night she came over secretly to see what it all meant. And before she neared the beach, she smelled the dead whales, and when she came up she saw the carcases lying all about, and there were so many that some of them had not yet been cut up. When she reached the house, she found the children grown up; and they welcomed her and gave her food, all she could eat, but gave her nothing to take back, telling her to come over again if she wanted more.

When Crow started back, the girl told her that when she reached home, she was to weep so that the people would believe they were dead. But Crow, on getting home, instead of doing as she was told, described how the beach was covered with sea gulls feeding on the whales that had been killed by the boys.

Now, Crow had brought with her secretly a piece of whale meat for her children, and, after
putting out the light, she fed it to them; and one of them ate so fast that she choked, and coughed a piece of meat out on the ground. And some of the people saw it, and then believed what Crow had told them, as they had not done before. Then the people talked it all over, and decided to go back; and they loaded their canoes and moved to the old village. And the boys became the chiefs of the village, and always kept the people supplied with whales. 12

A second version of the dog-husband theme comes from the Cheyenne in "The Girl Who Married a Dog."

A chief had a fine-looking daughter. She had a great many admirers. At night she was visited by a young man, but she did not know who he was. She worried about this and determined to discover him. She put red paint near her bed. When he crawled on her bed, she put her hand into the paint. When they embraced, she left red marks on his back.

The next day she told her father to call all the young men to a dance in front of his tent. They all came, and the whole village turned out to see them. She watched all that came, looking for the red marks she had made. As she turned about, she caught sight of one of her father's dogs with red marks on his back. This made her so unhappy and she went straight into her tent. This broke up the dance.

The next day she went into the woods near the camp, taking the dog on a string. She hit him. He finally broke loose. She was very unhappy, and several months later she bore seven pups. She told her mother to kill them, but her mother was kind toward them and made a little shelter for them. They began to grow, and sometimes at night the old dog came to them. After a time, the woman began to take an interest in them and sometimes played with them. When they were big enough to run, the old dog came and took them away.

When the woman went to see them in the morning, they were gone. She saw the large dog's tracks, and several little ones, and followed them at a distance.
She was sad and cried. She returned to her mother and said, "Mother, make me seven pairs of moccasins. I am going to follow the little ones, searching for them." Her mother made seven pairs of moccasins, and the woman started out, tracking them all the way. Finally, in the distance, she saw a tent. The youngest one came to her and said, "Mother, Father wants you to go back. We are going home. You cannot come." She said, "No! Wherever you go, I go." She took the little one and carried him to the tent. She entered and saw a young man, who took no notice of her. He gave her a little meat and drink, which did not grow less no matter how much she ate. She tied the little pup to her belt with a string. Next morning, she was left alone and the tent had vanished. She followed the tracks and again came upon them. Four times this happened in the same way. But the fourth time the tracks stopped.

She looked up into the sky. There she saw her seven pups. They had become seven stars, the Pleiades.

Both tales bear the same basic motif with variations. Thus, theme as well as structure may be viewed as a means of legitimizing Native American literature. Still other ways are to discuss character types and images or symbols.

There are too many character types in the oral tradition to discuss within the scope of this chapter; three of the most prominent have been selected. They are the twins, the culture hero, and the Trickster.

According to Feldmann (1971), "the story of the hero brothers, in many instances twins, who subdue the giants and monsters of the primeval age, appears in a great number of cosmogonic myths." The twins who represent the duality of
all people, one good and one bad, are usually of supernatural parentage and are able to transform themselves into a variety of shapes and ages. They generally live with their grandmother who is often Grandmother Spider, the representation of all womankind. Their primary purpose seems to be that of making the world a better place for the people. In the following Winnebago myth, "The Twins Alter the Book of Life," the Twins are responsible for the longer life-span of the people.

They traveled all over the world and killed all the evil spirits they encountered. Then they went under the earth, under the rivers, under the ocean and then above the earth, visiting the Night spirits, the Sun, the Moon, the Stars, the Thunderbirds—all of them. They visited the four worlds, too. Indeed they did not miss any place.

In the course of their travels they came to the place where the Earthmaker lives. They surprised him for never before had anyone, of his own accord, ever visited him. Now there were two very large lodges at that place, one belonging to Earthmaker and the other to Herecquina. Earthmaker and Herecquina lived there side by side. The boys went into the lodge of Herecquina first. "Well, my children, ever since I have been here no one has ever come to me of his own accord. You are the first who have come in this way. Why have you come and for what purpose?" Then the older of the twins said, "We were just traveling all over the earth, for no purpose in particular."

Herecquina was sitting there writing in a book and marking off the number of years human beings were to live. He was making them very short. "Say, why don't you make them long?" asked the boys. "This is the way Earthmaker created me. He put me in control of life. It is to be short because if all people were to live long lives, the world would soon become overcrowded. Then the people would be in a pitiable condition indeed. There would not be enough food to go around. This is the reason Earth-
maker created me, that I might decrease the number of people." Then they asked him to let them have the book for a little while and do the marking. Finally they persuaded him to give it to them. When they had the book they marked all the lives long. "Don't do that," he said. But they refused to obey him. He tried to take the book back but they refused to give it up for, although Herecquini, was the equal of Earthmaker, these boys were more powerful still. He was afraid of them.

A later counterpart of the Twins is the culture hero. The culture hero secures necessities for the people and is the protector of women and children. Very often he is one of a set of twin boys. This mortal hero may undergo a series of trials, have his magic tested, go on a self-appointed quest, journey to the underworld or be viewed as unpromising by his people through his trials, tests, and quests. Campbell's monomyth theory discussed earlier in this chapter would seem to reflect the elements most prominent in the culture hero stories (1977).

One myth surrounding a culture hero is "Masawi and the Deer" from the Laguna Pueblo. It tells how the Masawi secured the deer for the people.

Long ago Masawi came home at sundown. He did not find his sister at home. Then he was going to hunt for her and he was never going to turn back until he caught up with her.

He started from where he lived in the north and chased her all night. At dawn of day he was on top of a mountain peak called Cudyikotcw, and as he looked south of him, there in the distance he saw his sister going with a deer buck. Then he went eastward, down into the valley, as far as he could, right east of the deer with his sister. He sat there and waited until sunrise.
After the sun rose, he started up the hill. He went up, and the higher the sun rose, the nearer he came to his sister and the deer buck who were eating. When he came close, he spoke to the buck saying, "At this time of day--sunrise--I have caught up with you." Then the buck said, "I shall never give your sister back to you." Then said Masawi, "Are you sure of that?" And the buck said, "Yes." Then he shot the buck with an arrow and killed him. Then he killed all the deer people who were with his sister. His sister had also turned into a deer up to her joints.

Then when he had killed all of them, he took the ribs of the biggest buck and built a fire, and put the ribs of the biggest buck on the hot coals of the fire to roast. Then he offered a rib to his sister.

She did not eat and began to cry. Then Masawi said, "Do you feel sorry about the buck that I have killed?" And she did not answer him. When she hesitated, he shot her with an arrow through her heart and said, "I shall kill you just the same as I did the buck." Then he killed her, and when he killed her, two young fawns, a doe and a buck, came forth.

Then he took the two young ones up in his arms and said, "My dear nephews, I shall take both of you home with me." Then he took the ribs that were cooking and the two young ones and started home, singing on the way. Then the two fawns stayed home with him and they lay in the ashes which stuck to them in some places. Therefore the young ones of deer are spotted.

Then early in the morning and late at night, after they grew bigger, they would go on a run. In the daytime they stayed in the forest. At night they slept with their uncle. When they were big and full-grown, they told their uncle they were not going to stay with him any longer. Their home would be in the south. So they went south.

After they went south, they passed Laguna on the west and then they went farther to the south ridge, and they stayed there awhile until the doe brought forth two young ones, a doe and a buck. They stayed there until that time.
When the little ones were big enough to stay alone, they were left at this place, and the two older ones went farther south. The two younger ones brought forth deer in great numbers, and they still flourish there today.

Then the two older ones reached the Southern Mountains, and two brothers came: Masawi and Oyoyewi. They met the two deer and told the deer that from this time they were to become the food of the Indian people; their flesh was to be used as food and their skin was to be worn as clothing. And Masawi and Oyoyewi said that neither the white people nor the Mexicans were to be included, only the Indian tribes. And from that time on they were to bring forth as many deer as possible. That is the reason hunters today hunt this way and are able to catch deer.16

The last universal character type to be examined is the Trickster, a complex and multifaceted character. He is both good and bad, sometimes human and sometimes not, a combination of animal and human traits. He is both sly and stupid and can be demiurge, culture hero, marplot and buffoon, all at the same time.17 He is characterized by uncontrollable appetites which continually lead him into trouble but which often also, inadvertently, bring good to the people. The Coyote and the Raven are two of the trickster types found in the Native American oral tradition. The following Zuni Coyote tale, "The Sky Has Fallen," reveals the humor and excessive appetite involved in many Coyote stories.

One time Coyote met a turkey, and he ran and said, "Oh the sky is falling." The turkey said, "How do you know?" "A piece of the sky has fallen on my tail. I am looking for a hole to save myself." "May I go with you?" "Come along." As
they went they met a rooster, and Coyote said, "Oh, the sky is falling." The rooster said, "How do you know?" "A piece of the sky has fallen on my tail. I am looking for a hole to save myself." "May I go with you?" "Come along." This dialogue is repeated with first a lamb and then a goose. At last they came to a hole and, when they were in, Coyote turned and ate the goose. When he had eaten the goose he ate the lamb. When he had eaten the rooster he ate the turkey. He ate them all up and these animals never came out any more.  

Hamilton Tyler relates the following tale about Coyote in *Pueblo Animals and Myths* (1975):

When hunting customs were established, Coyote had an equal chance with the other beasts of prey, but one by one he breaks all of the proscriptions until at last he is utterly damned. When the original Keresan Hunt Chief layed down the hunting customs for all the beasts of prey to follow, they were told to fast for four days, so that they would be hungry when the hunt began. Wolf and Coyote broke this rule. The turn of these two came jointly and was to be in the east where there was an elk and a rabbit. Wolf tells Coyote that he will take the elk, which he does, eating only half of it.

Coyote next pursues the rabbit, killing it and eating all. When the beasts of prey return they are told that they will always eat game, "But you, Coyote, you will have for your food anything that any time you find and anything that already died by itself... you yourself caused trouble." Then as a final parting curse Coyote is told, "All day you will walk and all night."  

Other universals in the Native American oral tradition besides character types are a variety of images or symbols. There are frequent symbolic uses of certain numbers, colors, and the hoop or circle. To the Native American a symbol is a part of nature, a part of himself—something that is under-
stood with the heart. In the literature of the Christian-Judaic world, the number three has symbolic significance, but in the Native American world the significant numbers are four, six, and seven. The number four represents the four directions or corners of the earth—North, South, East, and West—and the powers or spirits associated with them. The number six represents the six points of the Native American world, the four directions plus the Zenith and the Nadir, and the number seven encompasses the world, including the individual.

The directions are also related to color. Each direction has a representative color. These vary from tribe to tribe, but the colors are representative of the natural powers associated with that direction. The Pueblo people, for example, associated the color red with the direction south, because the south is the home of summer and fire, which is red. The Sioux have the following correspondences: North (Black), West (White), South (Red), and East (Yellow).

The directions, the numbers, and the colors all come together in the hoop or circle. The hoop symbolizes unity and harmony, the continuing cycle of events. The Plains Indians refer to the hoop as the medicine wheel while other tribes refer to it as the hoop or the circle; most see and understand with their hearts that it is unity, harmony, and continuity.

Thus far, much has been said about the purpose of the
Native American oral tradition, its forms, the structure of the myths, universal characters and symbols, but little has been said about a very basic element, an element often taken for granted by non-Indian readers, "the word." To the Native American "the word" is all powerful. Margot Astrov in American Indian Prose and Poetry (1962) states:

The word, indeed, is power. It is life, substance, reality. The word lived before earth, sun, or moon came into existence. Whenever the Indian ponders over the mystery of origin, he shows a tendency to ascribe to the word a creative power all its own. The word is conceived of as an independent entity, superior even to the gods.

... the word is thought to precede the creator for the ... mind cannot imagine a creation out of nothingness. In the beginning was the thought, the dream, the word.20

N. Scott Momaday repeats this idea in many of his literary works. He envisions the word as sacred and all-powerful. It is through the word, the power of language, that an individual realizes himself and his world. "The state of human being is an idea, an idea which man has of himself. Only when he is embodied in an idea, and the idea is realized in language, can man take possession of himself."21 Momaday sees the word as a means of survival also, the survival of the people and their culture through the telling and continued telling of their oral traditions. And this continued telling is still going on today in the original and in modified form. The Native American writers of today are recording the stories
of their people and are using their culture and its beliefs as frameworks for their literary creations. They show a deep concern for their heritage and the necessity for its continuance.
CHAPTER THREE.

THE SOUTHWEST, THE PUEBLOS, LAGUNA, AND LESLIE SILKO

As important to Silko as the Laguna oral tradition is her feeling of belonging to a specific place, an area of the country, a particular pueblo. The Southwest and, in particular, Laguna, are vital elements in Silko's literary works and thus worthy of consideration when discussing those works.

That section of the United States designated as the Southwest extends from the eastern border of New Mexico west to California, and from the northern borders of Nevada, Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico south to the Rio Grande and Mexico. Ceded to the United States by Mexico in 1848, it is an area of distances and diversity. Within it lie plains, deserts, mesas, forested mountains, and canyons. In all this diversity, the common denominator seems to be the shortage of precipitation.

The vegetation of the Southwest is as diverse as the landscape. The mountains and high plateaus are blanketed by forests of yellow pine and Douglas spruce; the middle elevations display smaller trees such as the pinon, the dwarf pine, cedar, juniper, and cypress; and the lesser elevations are home to oaks and mesquite. Other vegetation native to the area are the century plant or agave, the yucca and, in the more arid sections, varieties of cacti.

The animals of the Southwest are those characteristic
of the western United States with occasional species native to Mexico such as the macaw and the peccary. Those of economic importance to the indigenous people of this area are the turkey, the quail, the deer, the antelope, the rabbit, and the elk.3

The Native American inhabitants of the Southwest are of two types "which have either migrated to that region from different places and at different times, or which, after long residence in the Southwest, have resulted from the breaking up of a previously uniform type."4 To simplify the matter, the inhabitants may be divided into two groups, the non-Pueblo and the Pueblo. Generally speaking, the non-Pueblo people historically were quite different from the Pueblo people, being primarily nomadic with little or no village life.5 Agriculture was of no great economic importance to them, rather hunting and fishing were. These differences were illustrated by such tribes as the Apache, the Mohave, and the Maricopa tribes who showed little or no uniformity in clan relationship or social division (see Figure 1).

By contrast, "the Pueblos and their ancestors are closely bound to the Plateau region of the southwestern part of the United States."6 In the past these people were permanent village dwellers who engaged primarily in farming. The men spun, wove, and tailored whereas the women built the houses,
owned the property, and made pottery. The Pueblos can be roughly divided into three groups according to language: the Tanoan, the Keresen, and the Zunian; or three groups according to location: Eastern, Rio Grande, and Western. Representatives of the Tanoan stock inhabit the villages
of Picuris, Pojoaque, Tesuque, Santa Clara, San Juan, San Ildefonso, Taos, Jemez, Sandia, Nambe, and Isleta. The Keresan dialects appear in Cochiti, Santa Domingo, San Filipe, Santa Ana, Sia, Acoma, and Laguna; and the Zunian linguistic stock is present in Zuni (see Figure 2). The most basic fact of the Pueblo people is the evidence of unity in diversity. Beneath the seeming disparities, "pueblo society revolves around five basic concerns: weather, illness, warfare, control of flora and fauna, and village harmony."
Although the basic concerns are the same, the approach to these concerns varies from pueblo to pueblo. For example, the Eastern Tanoan pueblos have a divided society in which the males of the tribe own both house and land. The Katcina cult (the organization of the tribe around sacred supernatural personages to whom supplications are offered through ceremonies intended to benefit the believers) is weak or absent and there are esoteric sodalities or secret societies instead. Religion plays a large role in the government of the people and there is an emphasis on hunting, curing, and exorcism ceremonies. In the western pueblos, however, clan membership is linked to the female who also owns the house and garden and into whose home a bridegroom moves. The Katcina cult is evident and religious emphasis is on weather control or rain production. In the Keresan pueblos, clanship is an important factor in government, religion, and marriage, and membership in a moiety or ceremonial organization is through the male line of descent. This clan and moiety system is superimposed on a dual kiva-katcina system. The medicine societies are primarily concerned with curing, exorcism, and weather control.

Among these diversities in approach to life lie some general characteristics. There are two types of ceremonies, the sacred and the secular. The sacred involve the medicine and clown associations, the communal ceremonies, and the
ceremonial associations; the secular are for entertainment. All of the pueblos reflect the influence of Catholicism.

The pueblo Laguna, "village of the lake," is generally categorized or classified as western Keresan, meaning that it lies west of the Rio Grande River and its occupants speak a dialect of the Keresan linguistic stock. Laguna lies in the San Jose Valley approximately 15 miles northeast of Acoma. Gunn in 1904 called it the "youngest of the Keres villages," its exact date of settlement being indefinite. Spanish records say it was settled in 1699, but there is evidence supporting an earlier date. Dozier (1970) states that Laguna was founded by Keresan Indians, refugees from the Rio Grande Keresan pueblos, who moved west after the revolt of 1696. And Eggan (1950) reports that "Laguna was founded in historic times by Keresan-speaking peoples from the Rio Grande--primarily from Santa Domingo, Cochiti, Zia, and other villages--as a result of disturbances brought about by the reconquest of New Mexico following the Pueblo Rebellion of 1680. The date of its founding is either 1697 or 1698; in 1699 it was visited by Governor Cubero and named San Jose de la Laguna."

The following list indicates some of the more important and/or interesting historical facts about Laguna:

1689 - Laguna received a land grant from the Mexican government.
1691 - After an uprising, the Lagunas surrendered to Diego de Vargas, Governor of New Mexico.
1760 - Population 600.
1797 - Laguna population totaled 817.
1805 - The Laguna people were able to gain land (Paguate Purchase) for service to the Spanish government.
1835 - Laguna purchased the El Rito.
1848 - The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ceded New Mexico and Arizona to the United States.
1851 - Samuel C. Gorman came to Laguna as a missionary for the Baptist Mission Society.
Late 1850s - General McCook set up a military camp at Laguna and many Laguna males acted as scouts.
1860 - Laguna population totaled 988.
Early 1860s - President Lincoln sent silver-headed canes to each of the governors of the Pueblo villages.
1862-1866 - Lagunas assisted U.S. Government in campaign against Navaho and received praise for their services.
1868 - W.F.M. Arny appointed agent of Pueblo Indian affairs.
1871 - Walter G. Marmon was appointed government teacher at Laguna.
1875 - Dr. John Menual sent to Laguna as missionary by the Presbyterian Church. He also was appointed government teacher, due to Marmon's resignation. He translated and published McGuffey's first reader in the Queres (Keres) language.
1876 - The Government surveyed the Pueblo grants due to original titles being lost. At this time there was also a confrontation between the Acomas and the Lagunas over a piece of land. The Lagunas enlisted the aid of Walter G. Marmon, who now owned a trading post at Laguna, and he led an armed party to the spot and the Acomas left. The Laguna land grant, however, was not confirmed by Congress.
1880-81 - Santa Fe Railroad crossed the Pueblo lands. A white, Robert G. Marmon, brother of Walter Marmon, was elected Governor of Laguna. He was the first white man to hold this position.
1890 - A Commission was appointed to investigate the Laguna claim which was found to be valid but too large.
1895 - The Laguna claim was resurveyed and they were given title to a body of land six miles square with the village of Laguna at its center.
Early 1900s - Efforts were made to suppress Indian customs and ceremonial activities.
1904 - Laguna population totaled 1,500.
1910 - Population 1,441.
1913 - The legal status of the Pueblos who became citizens of Mexico in 1821 was settled. They were to be treated as wards of the United States Government, not as citizens.
1922 - Population 1,808.
1934 - Indian Reorganization Act gave control of community to Indians themselves.
1941 - Population 2,600.
1946 - The reorganization of Field Service into Districts; New Mexico had three: Mecatero, Jacarella, and United Pueblos. "United Pueblos has jurisdiction over some twenty-two reservations with a total area of 1,987,117 acres and a population listed in 1944 of 14,640."14

This briefly is the history of Laguna, a pueblo that has come under the influence of many cultures--Mexican, Spanish, American, Western Puebloan, Keresan, and Rio Grande Puebloan, but a pueblo that has survived. But what of the social organization of Laguna, the way of life which Leslie Silko learned as a child? Eggan (1950) says the following about Laguna:

The central position of Laguna is now challenged by certain of the farming villages, notably Paguate and Mesita, but formerly it was the main political and ceremonial center, and most families maintain a house in Laguna and return for ceremonies and other occasions. The village is divided into matrilineal, exogamous clans which have totemic names and ceremonial, juridical, and economic functions. There is some slight clan linkage and a dual organization of clans in connection with ceremonial organization but no exogamous phratries which are groups of associated clans or moieties. The basic economic unit is the extended maternal household. . . .

The ceremonial organization is composed of the Medicine societies, the Katcina cult, the Kiva groups, and the "clown" organizations. For
certain dances there is an east-west division by clans according to their location with reference to the plaza. At one time there were presumably the War and Hunting societies noted for the other Keresan pueblos.15

According to Eggan (1950), the clan system in Laguna is the most important social grouping and is matrilineal, exogamous and totemically named. Thus, clan membership is determined through the female's line of descent, marriage within the clan is forbidden, and the names chosen for the clans are names which the people feel have some power. Phratry grouping or moiety organization for exogamic purposes is absent. The clans have definite economic, ceremonial, and juridicial functions which contrast with those limited functions at Acoma. The clans control land ownership, settle disputes, select clan heads, and preserve ritual paraphernalia and membership in the Medicine society. The clans are named totemically for animals and other objects of nature as in other pueblos. These animals or objects are prayed to for assistance. The various clans have different ceremonial duties: Antelope and Badger clans officiate at Katcina dances and Parrot clan controls the Salt place. Certain clans also keep and impersonate certain katcina, those supernatural beings in charge of the elements of the world.

According to Eggan (1950), "the ceremonial organization at Laguna has largely disintegrated, but it formerly centered
around the Medicine societies and the Katcina cult, with the Warriors, Hunters, and Clown Societies also represented. The cheani (medicine) orders are definitely separate from the Katcina cult, but the two are interrelated in many ways.\textsuperscript{16} The kiva organization which was formerly associated with the Katcina cult no longer functions. The Katcina cults deal with rain and general welfare.

The Medicine societies are open to anyone and deal mainly with curing although they also were connected with rain-making. Their cures are effected through the power of their corn-ear fetishes. The Medicine societies no longer function as units in Laguna society.

All of this information brings out Laguna and its more secular side, but what about the religious history, its Keres tradition. Gunn (1904) states that the religious belief of the ancient Queres (Keres) is a combination of polytheism and pantheism with a strain of totemism.

Their theory is that reason (personified) is the supreme power, a master mind that has always existed called Sitch-tche-na-ko. This is the feminine form for thought or reason. She had one sister, Shro-tu-me-na-ko, memory or instinct. Their belief is that Sitch-tche-na-ko is the creator of all, and to her they offer their most devout prayers, but never to Shro-tu-me-na-ko. They say it is bad to do so. This shows that they knew of the two divisions of the mind, reason and instinct, and also that they were aware of the uselessness and evil consequences of cultivating the subjective mind. E-yet-e-co is the most beloved of all the deities; to her they can all pray
as she is the mother who brought them forth and receives them when they die. E-yet-e-co means earth, but they speak of her in much the same manner as we speak of nature. She-wo-na, the spirit of force, reveals himself in the fog, the rain, the dew, and the mists; he manifests his power in the roll and surge of the waters, the storm and the rending stroke of lightning, and his voice is the deep roar of the thunder; Sitch-tche-na-ko created him out of a dew drop. Shru-wat-tu-ma is the evil spirit. . . . Literally the name means the one from a short way up. Spiritualists claim that the evil spirits inhabit the lower plane, just above the earth. Thus we have mind (reason and instinct), matter and force woven into a religion.17

This then is the background of Laguna, New Mexico, and the history which affected a young contemporary writer who calls Laguna her home--Leslie Marmon Silko. Her ties to Laguna are strong because of history and her family's role in that history. In her collection of poetry, Laguna Woman (1974), Silko wrote:

The white men who came to the Laguna Pueblo Reservation and married Laguna women were the beginning of the half-breed Laguna people like my family, the Marmon family. The Marmons are very controversial, even now; but I think that people watch us more closely then they do full bloods or white people. In the long run we aren't much different from other Laguna families.18

In 1871 Walter G. Marmon was appointed government teacher at Laguna, a position he held until 1875 when he resigned. He then operated a trading post in Laguna. It was he who in 1876 led the Lagunas in the confrontation with the Acomas over land (see Figure 3).
His brother, Robert G. Marmon (Silko's great-grandfather), came to Laguna in the 1870s after the Civil War as a surveyor with a government contract. He married a native of Paguate and they had two sons—Henry (Hank) Anaya and Kenneth. After his first wife's death he married her sister, Marie Anaya (Grandma A'mooh), and they had three sons, one named Walker K., and a daughter, Bessie. Robert G. learned to speak the Laguna language and suffered the taunts of "Squaw Man" because of his marriage to an Indian woman. During his time in Laguna, he operated a store. In 1880 or 1881 he was elected governor of
Laguna, the first white man to hold such a high position. His wife, Marie Anaya, had attended Carlisle Indian School. Silko remembers that her great-grandmother still washed her hair with yucca roots and ground peppers on a grinding stone when Silko herself was a young girl. She also told her children and grandchildren stories.

Henry (Hank) Anaya Marmon grew up at Paguate with his Grandmother and Grandfather Anaya. He attended Sherman Institute in Riverside, California, where he was trained to be a store clerk even though he wanted to be an automobile designer. At one time he served as a tour guide in the area and in 1908 he drove some of the archeologists to Enchanted Mesa which was being excavated. After he returned from Sherman Institute he worked in Abie Abraham's store and then, after his marriage to Lillie Stagner, opened a store of his own.

Hank's sister-in-law Susie Reyes, who married Walter K. Marmon, told Silko many of the Laguna myths and stories. As a girl she had attended Carlisle Indian School and Dickenson College, and in the 1920s she taught school at Old Laguna. Even after she retired from teaching and spent her time at the Marmon Ranch she continued to study and to write down as much of the Laguna oral tradition as she could before it was lost forever. This aspect of Aunt Susie's character seems to have left a lasting impression on Silko herself.

Grandma Lillie was the daughter of _____ Stagner who
Helen (?) Bill Romero

Li Stagner Stagner

Lillie Henry (Hank) Anaya Marmon

(?) Lee H. Richard H. - Marmon Marmon

Wendy Gigi LESLIE MARMON SILKO

Figure 4. Kinship chart showing relationships of Lillie Stagner Marmon to Leslie Marmon Silko

came to Laguna from Texas with his brother Bill. He married Helen Romero and in the 1920s ran a cafe in Laguna (see Figure 4).

Hank and Lillie's son, Lee H. Marmon, was born in Laguna and helped his grandparents (Robert and Marie) with their grocery store. He became interested in photography while in the Army. He married a woman of undetermined tribal connections from Montana. At one time he was elected treasurer of Laguna.

Leslie Marmon Silko is Lee's daughter. She was born on March 5, 1948, in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and grew up in the
house at Laguna where her father was born, which was next
door to her great-grandmother, Maria Anaya. Because her
mother had to work, Silko spent a great deal of time with
her great-grandmother. She attended Head Start school and
third and fourth grades at Laguna at the BIA school. After
that she commuted every day to Albuquerque Indian School
until the family moved to Albuquerque when she was sixteen.
After high school she attended the University of New Mexico.

In the "Notes by the Contributors" in The Man to Send
Rain Clouds (1974), Leslie Marmon Silko wrote:

I grew up at Laguna Pueblo. I am of mixed-breed
ancestry, but what I know is Laguna. This place
I am from is everything I am as a writer and
human being. 19

And these sentiments are clearly illustrated in her poetry
and fiction where she has interwoven the stories of
Laguna with her contemporary versions of those same stories.
CHAPTER FOUR.

THE COYOTE TALES

According to Paul Radin (1975), "few myths have so wide a distribution as the one known by the name of The Trickster." Radin characterizes the Trickster, who may appear in the mythologies of various tribes as Coyote, Hare, or Raven, as being simultaneously creator/destroyer, giver/negator, duper/duped. "He wills nothing consciously. At all times he is constrained to behave as he does from impulses over which he has no control. He knows neither good nor evil yet he is responsible for both. He possesses no values, moral or social, is at the mercy of his passions and appetites, yet through his actions all values come into being." He is a dichotomy, a duality, as are all humans.

This combination of divinity and profanity can be viewed both seriously and light-heartedly, but very often the divinity of Trickster is secondary to the profanity. The Winnebago Trickster cycle as recorded by Radin gives an example of the Trickster as divinity or demigod. The following excerpt from the Winnebago shows the Trickster in the role of culture hero aiding the people.

Then he went around the earth. He started at the end of the Mississippi river and went down to the stream. The Mississippi is a spirit-village and the river is its main road. He knew that the river was going to be inhabited by Indians and that
is why he traveled down it. Whatever he thought
might be a hindrance to the Indians he changed.
He suddenly recollected the purpose for which he
had been sent to the earth by Earthmaker. That
is why he removed all those obstacles along the
river.3

The Winnebago cycle also illustrates the other side of
the Trickster as is witnessed by the following selection:

Again he wandered aimlessly about the world.
On one occasion he came in sight of the shore of
a lake. To his surprise, he noticed that right
near the edge of the lake a person was standing.
So he walked rapidly in that direction to see who
it was. It was someone with a black shirt on.
When Trickster came nearer to the lake, he saw
that this individual was on the other side of the
lake, and that he was pointing at him. He called
to him, "Say, my younger brother, what are you
pointing at?" But he received no answer. Then,
for the second time, he called, "Say, my younger
brother, what is it you are pointing at?" Again
he received no answer. Then, for the third time,
he addressed him, again receiving no answer. There
across the lake the man still stood, pointing.
"Well, if that's the way it's going to be, I, too,
shall do that. I, too, can stand pointing just as
long as he does. I, too, can put a black shirt
on." Thus Trickster spoke.

Then he put on his black shirt and stepped
quickly in the direction of this individual and
pointed his finger at him just as the other was
doing. A long time he stood there. After a while
Trickster's arm got tired so he addressed the
other person and said, "My younger brother, let
us stop this." Still there was no answer. Then,
for the second time, when he was hardly able to
endure it any longer, he spoke, "Younger brother,
let us stop this. My arm is very tired." Again
he received no answer. Then, again he spoke,
"Younger brother, I am hungry! Let us eat now
and then we can begin again afterward. I will
kill a fine animal for you, the very kind you
like best, that kind I will kill for you. So let
us stop." But still he received no answer. "Well,
why am I saying all this? That man has no heart at all. I am just doing what he is doing." Then he walked away and when he looked around, to his astonishment, he saw a tree stump from which a branch was protruding. This is what he had taken for a man pointing at him. "Indeed, it is on this account that the people call me the Foolish One. They are right." Then he walked away. 4

A clear example of the profane in the Trickster character is presented in this Crow tale, "Old-Man-Coyote and the Strawberry."

One day Old-Man-Coyote came down to the river valley and was eating wild strawberries from a bush, when he saw four women coming toward him. He quickly transferred himself under the earth, beneath the strawberry bush, and caused his penis to project up into the bush among the strawberries.

When the women came along to the bush where Old-Man-Coyote was concealed, they began to pick and eat the strawberries. One of them tried to pick the head of the penis for a strawberry, and as she could not pluck it, she stooped over and tried to bite it off. She called out to her companions, who also tried to pluck it but could not. So they determined to cut it off and take it home, and began to hunt for a sharp piece of flint. But when they got back to the bush, the strawberry had disappeared. Then they declared it to have been Old-Man-Coyote. . . 5

This then is the Trickster represented by Coyote in two different cultures. But in the Pueblo oral tradition Coyote is not interchangeable with the Trickster. Coyote is a character in his own right. According to Hamilton Tyler (1975), to the Pueblo people the Coyote as Trickster is secondary to the War Twins and he is "far more often a mere bungler rather than a cosmic bungler, and it is not often that his cosmic
doings result in transformations." Pueblo Coyote does show some traits of the Trickster such as wandering and excessive hunger, but his role in the Pueblo oral tradition is not that of the universal Trickster.

There are traces of Coyote as a trickster-type in the Pueblo oral tradition, but the role of Coyote has been defined by his activities as a big game predator, a death figure, a wanderer, a secondary trickster-transformer, and a culture hero. Because of the Pueblo peoples' constant struggle for physical survival, the hunting ability of an animal is of vast importance when granting that animal deity. To the Pueblo people Coyote is a second-rate hunter whose much vaunted cleverness is really a form of antisocial stupidity which often leads to his own destruction. This attitude is reflected in the myth in which hunting customs are established and Coyote who broke the rule of not fasting and not eating all of what is killed is destined to live off carrion and to be an incessant wanderer. Coyote's appearance as a death figure probably stems from his feeding on dead things and the fact that his stench is associated with carrion as is his role as wanderer. Tyler (1975) clarifies Coyote's role as wanderer in the following manner:

Coyote is best seen on the basis of the logic of free association, starting with his natural qualities as an animal. His ceaseless wandering, for example, makes him an excellent messenger. . . .
His voice naturally associates him with the town crier. As a wanderer he is not only a messenger, but even more often a scout for migrating parties. Scouts are associated with war parties and this role is reinforced by the fact that clowns in real life were also scouts and both clowns and Coyote are buffoons. In part this role came about because this pep and humor held up the spirits of people engaged in difficult and dangerous enterprises, whether in war or in migrations.  

Coyote also has the lesser functions of Trickster, transformer, and culture hero in Pueblo mythology. As Trickster he makes a muddle of things from the beginning of time and continues his cosmic bungling; he steals, and is responsible for the loss of paradise. As transformer, he is heavily associated with witchcraft, "Variously First Witch, a pet of witches, or the animal into which witches or their victims are transformed."  

Coyote's last role is that of culture hero. His activity and diligence are characteristic of the culture hero and he is reported to have brought the Pueblos fire, but this is a less important role for Coyote in the Pueblo oral tradition.  

The Coyote tales collected at Laguna by Gunn (1904, 1917), Parsons (1918, 1920, 1931), and others are few, but they reflect much of the above Pueblo attitude toward this animal god. Most of the tales collected deal with Coyote the duper who becomes the duped. "Borrowed Feathers" is one such tale.  

Long ago the bluebirds were grinding. Coyote began to grind too. The bluebirds said, "Let us all go get a drink on top of Katsima (Enchanted
Mesa near Acoma)! But what shall we do with our friend here? He has no feathers. We must give him some of our feathers." So they gave him of their feathers. They flew to the top of the mesa. They drank. Then they said, "Let us take back our feathers! Let us leave Coyote here!" They took all their feathers away from him. He roamed about looking for a way down. He began to jump. It was steep. He fell and killed himself. The bluebirds wondered what became of him.11

Another tale in which Coyote's legendary cleverness brings about his own downfall is "Tail by Tail."

Long ago at Katsima the shtoroka were dancing down in a rock hole. They sang,—

Hama giana
hama giana
Gowawaiima chiaia
gatoweimishi chirikisha
hama hama chaiera
aha ha aha
ihi hi ihi
aiha aiha lino lino

Up came Coyote. He listened to the song. He liked it. He went and called the other coyotes to hear the song. Six coyotes came. "How are we to get down and learn the song?" asked one. "Let us hold on each to the tail of the other; but none must break wind." They started down, each holding the tail of the other. Then the one in the middle broke wind, and all fell down. They fell in a pile and were killed. The shtoroka got their skins, and wore them around their necks.12

Another version of this tale relates the forming of the Coyote chain to the legendary hunger of Coyote. There are also tales at Laguna of the use of witchcraft in connection with Coyote such as the following, "Bewitched into Coyote."
There were two girls. They were used to each other, friends. One was a witch. They were going to grind. The witch said, "In the morning we will get up early and start to grind. We will sleep here at my house." The one who was not a witch, her mother did not think of her. The witch told her mother she was going to spend the night at her house. The one who was not a witch had a handsome boy. The witch wanted him. By night they cooked the corn they had ground. The witch said, "If only we had something good to eat!" The one who was not a witch said, "If only we had! Let us go and find a turkey."--"Look, this is the way." The witch took a coyote skin. She stretched it. She said, "Go under it, and say, 'I am a coyote.'" She turned into a coyote. The two coyotes went to where the turkeys were. They went into a deep hole. The girl who was not a witch said, "How can you get them? It is so deep." The witch said, "Come on! You go in first. Then hand me up a turkey. Then I will pull you up." As soon as the girl who was not a witch handed her the turkey, the witch said, "Now, somebody will kill you here." She left the other girl and took the turkey to her house to eat. She was jealous because the other girl had such a handsome boy. The girl inside the hole tried to jump up and up. She got up. She was a coyote. She was looking for old moccasins to eat. She did not go back to her house. Her mother lost her. Her mother went to the witch's house. The witch said, "She went out last night. I do not know where she went." Her mother went away and cried. The boy went out into the fields. The coyote was lying there asleep. He reached for it. The coyote did not move. The boy said, "Look, here is a coyote." Tears began to fall from the eyes of the coyote. The boy said, "Are you Kuchininako?" The coyote nodded her head. "Who made you this way? I suppose it was that wicked witch." The coyote nodded her head again. The boy said, "Come, I will carry you home." He put her on his back and carried her to his house. He said to his mother, "Mother, here is Kuchininako. Somebody turned her into a coyote, poor thing." His mother said, "Put her down on this bear skin, poor thing." The boy went around asking if anybody knew how to turn anything its own way again. Towards evening the boy carried the coyote towards Acoma asking if anybody knew how to put it back its own
way again. They all said no. Nobody knew how. He took the coyote even to the Navaho and they did not know how. He even took the coyote to the Chishe (Apache). They did not know how. He even took the coyote on his back to Aruokerk (Albuquerque). There was an old man. The old man said, "Are you here?" The boy said, "Yes." The coyote was lying by him. The old man said, "Where are you going?"--"I am looking for somebody who knows how to put a coyote its own way again." He asked the old man to sit down and eat with them. "Maybe you know how."--"Yes, I know how. Go back. In four days I will be there." The boy put the coyote on his back and went to his house where his mother lived. When the mother saw the coyote was still its own way, the boy told his mother that in four days there was a man who would come. The mother started to clean up and to make everything ready. The boy went hunting for deer so as to pay the man when he came. His mother had so much deer meat that it was all drying up. The man came in four days. (The house of the witch is still there in Acoma.) There were witches there to see the man turn the coyote into its own way. The boy's father took the man into the house. The man had a long knife. He cut off the skin of the coyote. Under the skin the girl carne out. The mother of the girl was there and when she carne out they threw up things. They gave the man meat and moccasins. They made a pretty head rest for the girl and an ugly head rest for the witch. She set the head rest on her head when she went for water. The witch saw her going for water. "Oh, look how pretty your head rest is!" The girls said, "Huma! I have two of them!" The witch said, "Will you give me one?"--"Yes, I will give you one. I have two of them." The witch said, "Let us go for more water."--"All right." She gave her the ugly head rest. She had the pretty head rest on her head. They went for water. There was a steep place. The witch said, "Give it to me."--"Go way down and I will roll it down. When you go down, sit with your arms spread and watch for it." The witch said, "Hina (all right)." Then she rolled it down to her and it hit the witch's knees and she turned into a big snake. The witch snake had two heads. The War captains called the people. The put the snake into a moccasin and threw it into a corner of Katsima.
There are still snakes on Katsima with two heads. They left the snake there. Nobody took off its skin. It remained a snake. Tometsich. 13

From the Coyote tales of the Pueblo people and Laguna in particular, Leslie Silko weaves contemporary fiction which is a complex blending of the old and the new; the old stories of the Laguna oral tradition are presented; stories borrowed from other cultures are used; events in Laguna history are retold in the framework of a coyote character type. Added to these is the influence of Silko herself as "a clever trickster." 14

All of the views of the Coyote oral tradition are a part of the complex Coyote as he appears in Silko's poetry and fiction. They are elements incorporated in her use of the traditional Coyote and her use of a modern Charlie Coyote character type. The poem, "Toe'osh: A Laguna Coyote Story" (1974), is a clear illustration of the various aspects of the Coyote myths and characteristics as used by Silko. The poem has eight sections which are divided into traditional Coyote tales from the Laguna Pueblo and the Navajo, historical events retold in the framework of a modern day Charlie Coyote character and the presence of the laughter and humor which often accompany Coyote.

Sections I, II, and VII of the poem deal with the Coyote tales of the oral tradition in compressed form. Section I integrates the past and present by placing the telling of the tales in a modern setting. The story from the oral tradition
compressed in this section is the origin of Coyote's coat. Section II relays a Coyote tale borrowed from the Navajos. In an interview with Evers and Carr (1976), Silko stated that "one was this Navajo story that the students told me when I was teaching at Navajo Community College." The story concerns a contest Coyote had with Chipmunk, Badger, and Skunk over who could sleep outside in a snow storm the longest. Coyote waited until the others were asleep and crept in where it was warm, returning in the morning before the others got up and claiming the prize.

Section VII relates the tail-by-tail story of the Laguna Pueblo people. Parsons (1918) gives two versions of this tale from two different informants. The first is as follows:

Hamah, south, the K'atsina Shturuka were dancing. Coyote met them. They had watermelons, corn and everything from the ground. He wanted to eat it all, but it was too steep, he could not get it up. They gave him fruit to fool him. He went after the other coyotes and called them--"ululu! ululu!" The others heard him and came around and all met together there. After they met, they asked him what it was. He said there was something nice there. They went together. When they were dancing, they tried to climb up, but they could not reach it. Each one held the tail of the other in his mouth. The one in the middle opened his mouth and all dropped down. They died. They cut them open and put their skins around their necks. Tometsich.

The second version recorded by Parsons (1918) is slightly different in that it does not refer to Coyote's famous gluttony. It tells that Coyote liked the dancers' songs and that he and
his five friends wanted to go down and learn it. Thus, they formed the chain, after all were cautioned not to break wind, but one of them did and the coyotes fell and died as in the first version. 17

Silko's version, both poetic and prose, combined elements from both of the above tales. The prose version, given in an interview, definitely shows the elements of twentieth century storytelling:

Coyote comes over to the edge of this mesa and peeks over and sees these dancers. . . . And they had laid out all the food that they were going to eat after they got done dancing or practicing dancing, or whatever. Whatever they were doing down there was kind of mysterious. Coyote is peeking over the edge, and there are all these nice things down there, and the dancers are laying them out not knowing that Coyote is peeking over. You get the sense that Coyote's all alone. Then he kind of goes, "mmmm, wow. It looks good, but it's way down there." I guess it's on a mesa where it's miles to go around and get down. So finally he has an idea. He runs back from the edge, and he starts calling, "Ooooh, ooooh," you know, calling all his cousins. And they gather, and he says, "I've got this idea. Look. Look down there." And they all look, and they're excited, but they say, "Well, how are we gonna get it?" And he says, "Ah, that's why I've called you. I have this brilliant idea, and this is how it's going to work." Some of them are kind of doubtful, and they say, "Wow, this is really high, and if anything were to happen. . . ." "No, no, don't worry." And then, you get the coyote chain, so that in the longer version it's really funny because when it finally happens, when one farts and they all fall down, it's even better because Coyote's been reassuring all the others, telling them there's not a thing to worry about that everything's gonna go fine. 18

This version, a combination of at least two oral versions of the story, is then compressed into the poetic version offered
in Section VII of "Toe'osh: A Laguna Coyote Story:"

They were after the picnic food
that the special dancers left
down below the cliff.
And Toe'osh and his cousins hung themselves
down over the cliff
holding each other's tail in their mouth making a
coyote chain
until someone in the middle farted
and the guy behind him opened his
mouth to say "What stinks?" and they
all went tumbling down, like that.19

The elements of the oral tradition are there, but in a combined or blended form. The basic story is present in the poem even though much detail has been omitted.

Sections III, IV, V, VI, and VIII superimpose the Charlie Coyote character type on events or situations from the history of Laguna. Silko sees the Charlie Coyote type as a person who enjoys playing jokes on others, particularly those who feel their own importance, as in her comment that "this Charlie Coyote type [started] to size up the anthropologist."20 and then told him a string of lies. The Charlie Coyote type appears to be the person who can pull a joke off or make someone else appear foolish; he also seems to be doing the best he can even if he has to try and try and try.

In Section III the arrival of the whites at Laguna is connected with Charlie Coyote character. This is an autobiographical section because the whites referred to are Silko's ancestors—the Marmons, Pratts, and Gunns who came to Laguna after the Civil War, married and stayed. Thus
Silko is herself a Charlie Coyote type, one of their descendants who "are howling in the hills southeast of Laguna."21

Section IV introduces Charles Coyote himself and comments on his sexual appetite, an element of the oral tradition's characterization of him. Sections V and VI again show the Charlie Coyote type in action when the Laguna people keep the gifts the politicians give them and then don't vote and when an important (or self-important) man, the vice president of the Trans-Western pipeline, is kept waiting.

Section VIII deals with a much more serious use of the Charlie Coyote character as the force which makes the white world say "Excuse Me" for their actions over the last 300 or 400 years. Of all the stanzas, it is the only one which does not contain the open mirth and laughter generally associated with Coyote tales but is ironic in that the white man misunderstands and thinks the "Excuse Me" refers only to a single present instance.

In Silko's new work, Storyteller (1981), a new and lengthier poetic version of the tail by tail story contained in Section VII of "Toe'osh" appears. The basic story is the same but because of detail and dialogue, it is closer to the tradition of story telling than the section in "Toe'osh." Compare the following excerpts:
They were after the picnic food
that the special dancers left
down below the cliff.

Coyotes and the Stro'ro'ka Dancers

Long ago
near the Acoma mesa
there was another mesa
with very precipitous walls.
A lone coyote appeared
on the mesa top.
Down below in the valley
there was a group
of ceremonial dancers
the Stro'ro'ka Ka'tsinas
who were holding a dance
And he was thrilled
with the sight
and he said
"My! Look down below!
Those dancers have beautiful costumes
they have brought wonderful things
to eat--
    melons and squashes!"

Things that the Lagunas,
the Keres people
have always had as food
from way back traditional
in the traditional state
and
"How could one get
all that food?"
So he said
"I think I'll call
my clanspeople
the Coyote Clan."
So he got to the very edge
and he gave this cry,
this signal:
"Ama doo roo a roo!"
Which in coyote language
meant "to come"
and one coyote appeared
and he says
to this one
"Look down below
and see the wonder!
Look at all that food
the Stro'ro'kas have brought
to give away
if one could only get at them."

So the first coyote
was thrilled
and he says
"How can we get down there?
The cliff is high and precipitous."
So he said
"We'll call some others."
So the first one
again made a call:
"Ama doo roo a roo!"
And two more came.
And he said
to the two
who had just arrived
"Look down below!"
Look what a sight there is!
All the food
The Stro'ro'ka dancers
have brought!
And how can we get
down there?"

So he said
"I believe I'll call--
give another call!"
And so he did.
He said
"Ama doo roo a roo!"
and a whole bunch of them
came--of coyotes,
The first one
said to them
"Look down below!
Look what a beautiful sight!
All the food
the Stro'ro'kas
and their ceremonial dance
have brought."

and
"How shall we get down there?"
So he said
   "I think I have an idea
   We know that the cliff
   is high
   and there's no other way
   to get down there,
   so I have an idea."

He says
   "I think if we just hang down
   some way--"

He says
   "If we just bite
   one another's tail
   and in that way
   we'll go down
   in a long string."22

In both poems the next line or lines tell how the coyotes hung themselves over the cliff, but what a difference in getting there. Silko's new version is a great deal closer to the prose version she related above. There is also a concern with place, with character development, with the relationship between the tale and the Laguna people and with the understanding of the tale. It is an example of traditional storytelling.

Still another poem in Storyteller (1981) deals with Coyote—in this instance the Charlie Coyote character and his relationship as Silko sees it to the Marmon family. There is reference to a story collected at Laguna by Parsons (1920) which is noted for those who wish to read it.

In 1918 Franz Boas, ethnologist and linguist passed through Laguna. His talented protegé Elsie Clews Parsons stayed behind to collect Laguna texts
from which Boas planned to construct a grammar of the Laguna language.

... In the collection which Parsons made there is a coyote story told in Laguna by my great-grandfather. It is a very simple story with a little song which is repeated four times the meadowlark teasing the she-coyote calling her 

"Coyote long-long-long-long mouth!"

Until Coyote gets so confused and upset she spits out the water she was carrying back to her pups. Four times Coyote tries to carry the water back and four times Meadowlark sings this song 

"Coyote long-long-long-long mouth!"

And Coyote opens her mouth spilling the water. When she finally gets back to her pups they are all dead from thirst.23

... All I know of my great-grandpa Marmon are the stories my family told and the old photographs which show him a tall thin old white man with a white beard wearing a black suit coat and derby hat. He stands with his darker sons and behind the wire-rim glasses he wore I see in his eyes he had come to understand this world differently. Maybe he chose that particular coyote story to tell Parsons because for him at Laguna that was the one thing he had to remember! No matter what is said to you by anyone you must take care of those most dear to you.24

Silko also used the Charlie Coyote character in a short story entitled "Coyote Holds a Full House in His Hand." The title itself is ironic as the story proves. The character-
istics associated with the Charlie Coyote character in this story are the ability to tell stories to justify actions, perseverance, the misunderstanding of others, and the pulling off of the ultimate joke.

The story deals with a Charlie Coyote type who is courting a Hopi widow. Upon visiting the widow, he discovers she has used his letters and gifts as a source of entertainment and prestige with her friends. In retaliation for this and the fact that many Pueblo women, including his former girlfriend Mildred have married or preferred Hopi men, he plays a practical joke on the woman and her friends. He convinces them that he is a medicine man and that in order for the widow's aunt to get well, all the women must participate in a curing ceremony involving his covering their thighs with ashes, thus caressing their legs. The women comply, and Charlie Coyote emerges victorious. He has balanced the score between the Hopi and the Laguna.

Although this story is obviously contemporary, it has all the earmarks of a traditional Coyote tale. The Coyote's appetite and his cunning are obviously present. There is the duality of the duped and the duper. There is also the irony, mirth, and laughter present in the traditional tales. There is also the Charlie Coyote who doesn't appear silly, but who uses laughter to defend himself against the harsh realities of life.
The complexity of Coyote in both the poems and the short story gives some indication of the intense intermingling of concepts of the oral tradition and Silko's own views in her poetry and prose. Silko's works about Coyote illustrate aspects of the traditional character and hint at the evolving, continuing Coyote character.
CHAPTER FIVE.

YELLOW WOMAN

Yellow Woman (Kochinako) is as complex a character as Coyote and the complexity begins in the oral tradition itself. There are at least six interpretations of the Yellow Woman character. To begin with, Yellow Woman is a Kachina, one of a set of female goddesses of the directions, in this case the North. As a kachina or spirit which the Pueblo people respect, she shares in the function of rainmaking and in some tales is called "the mother of all kachinas."\(^1\) The simplest approach is that of Leslie White (1930) who sees Yellow Woman or K'ot cininak'o as a generic term applied to any or all women of the mythical era.\(^2\) Hamilton Tyler (1975) and Charles Lummis (1894) identify Yellow Woman as the Moon Mother and mother of the War Twins by the Sun.\(^3\) Tyler also expands his view to include Yellow Woman's role as game keeper goddess, the consort or sister of Arrow Youth. Here she is seen often as a huntress and generally has difficulties, usually in the form of abductions, which Tyler sees as related to her role as the Moon which disappears periodically. Tyler also points out that Yellow Woman is much more because she is the giver of women's dress, baskets, and place names.

In her article on the Keres traditions in Silko's short fiction, LaVonne Ruoff (1978) gives the summary of the basic
elements of the traditional abduction story as listed by Franz Boas. This type of story is the one most frequently associated with Yellow Woman. They include: an abduction when a woman goes to draw water, the woman's refusal at first to be abducted, a threat of death from the abductor, and a series of impossible tasks to perform lest she be killed. This basic framework applies to an unlimited number of tales revolving around the Lummis and Tyler views of Yellow Woman as kachina, moon goddess, mistress of game, and giver of dresses, baskets, and place names.

There are various versions of the two basic stories referring to the Moon image of Yellow Woman. The first story, her abduction by Mast-Truan or Masts-tru-oi has been recorded by Lummis (1894) and John Gunn (1917). The Lummis version deals with an explanation of the Moon's disappearance every month. In this version, Mast-Truan, one of the Storm-Gods, steals Yellow Woman and with the help of fairy-woman, she escapes. This explains the moon's disappearance and reappearance each month. In the Gunn version Yellow Woman is stolen by Masts-tru-oi, the Cliff-Dweller, and set to the impossible task of shelling and grinding four rooms full of corn in four days. She accomplishes this task with the aid of spider woman, a representative of all of womankind. Her next task is to bring water from the four directions which she again does with the aid of spider woman, a reference to
her kachina role. At last she escapes and she and spider woman kill Mast-tru-oi when he attempts to stop them.  

Another abduction myth deals with Yellow Woman's departure with Buffalo Man. Tyler (1975) records it as follows:

Arrow Youth was a deer hunter and he was married to the daughter of Chief-Remembering-Prayer-Sticks. His wife was Yellow-Woman, or Kochinako, who is not a forward woman. When she meets Buffalo Man at the spring she first says she cannot go with him, because of her water jar. [Kachina association with water.] He tells her to put it upside down by the spring and let him carry her on his back. "Then westward they went," through a mountain gap to a sky high mountain on top of which was his home. "Up on the trail they went out and up." From that day onward Arrow Youth could kill no deer. [Association to role as game-keeper.]

While on an unsuccessful hunt Arrow Youth awakened early one morning. "Then in the east came up his friend the Big Star" who spoke to him. "I'll tell you this," said the Star, "yesterday morning," said he, 'Buffalo-Man stole your wife, Yellow-Woman, therefore you cannot kill any deer.'" Having learned this Arrow Youth returns home, gathers up his quiver of many arrows and a flint knife. He finds the water jug upside down, then follows the tracks to the westward. By and by he comes to the cottonwood tree and engages the aid of Old Woman Spider, who offers to help by making the trail short and by providing him with four kinds of medicine which he is to blow on the guards of Buffalo Man, as well as the Buffalo. Then he may bring back his wife and "the other Yellow-Woman." [White's generic term.]

These guards prove to be the beasts of prey, Mountain Lion, Wolf, Bear, and Wildcat, as well as rattlesnakes. The medicine not only pacifies these guards, but changes them into helpers of Arrow Youth. "Go ahead, you must bring her here."
From here on we shall help you." When he arrives Arrow Youth blows the medicine on the Buffalo, putting them tight asleep. With his flint knife he cuts his wife's bonds. Next he calls on the help of Eagle Man to quickly take them down from this mountain in the sky.

Then the buffalos awakened, discovered the escape and began a pursuit. "They went with the Wind. Then Arrow Youth looked backward and saw the wind. Quickly he chewed medicine and then he blew on it. Then it stopped." When they reach the guards, these urge the escaping party to hasten. "After some time again the Buffaloes behind them. With hail they were going. Then Arrow Youth looked backward again. He saw the hail-storm behind. Again quickly he chewed medicine and again blew it Arrow-Youth upon the buffaloes. Then it stopped."

The cottonwood tree . . . appears again, offering the fugitives a haven from the pursuing buffaloes. Most of the great animals passed this tree. "Then one, the last one, was a young buffalo. He stood up under the cottonwood tree." At this point Yellow Woman is forced to pass water. "Underneath was standing the young buffalo. The water sprinkled on the back of the young buffalo." The Young calf then calls out to the other buffalo that sister-in-law is sitting in the tree. . . . The Buffalo Men decide then to cut down the tree. Arrow Youth pulled out his bow and took out his arrows, "Buffalo Man he butted the cottonwood tree, but he shot him and he fell down." One by one Arrow Youth kills all of the animals.

"I'll tell the people to come for buffalo meat," said Arrow Youth. Then after some time his wife was crying all the time. 'Why are you crying?' said Arrow Youth. 'Because,' said Yellow Woman, 'did you not kill my husband, Buffalo-man?' 'Indeed?' said he. 'Did you love this man very much?' said Arrow Youth. 'Yes,' said Yellow Woman. Then in his turn down there he killed his wife. Then he took the other Yellow Woman." The two of them then went to the town.
"'Father,' said Arrow Youth, 'I did not bring your daughter, Yellow Woman here.' '--'Why?' said her father, the Chief. 'Because,' said he, 'I killed her.' '--'Indeed, why did you kill her?' '--'Because,' said Arrow Youth, 'because she did not want to come this way. She loved her husband Buffalo Man very much, so I killed her.' '--'Indeed?' said the Chief. 'All right,' said he, 'never mind.'"

"Then again thus spoke Arrow Youth, 'Now go ahead, tell the people, all the men who live here, to go for buffalo meat.' Then the Chief spoke thus, 'Let me tell them.' He spoke thus, 'From here men and young men, go ahead to get buffalo meat. . . . There in the corner in the north under the cottonwood tree,' said the Chief, 'there Arrow Youth killed all the buffaloes.' Then the people said, 'let us get it,' they said. Then they went to get the buffalo meat."

A story which deals with Yellow Woman as the Moon is the battle of the seasons. Lummis (1894), Gunn (1917), and Pradt (1963) all give versions of this story. In the Lummis version Yellow Woman is the "belle" of the village. She meets the stranger S ho'kee-ah (the North Wind) while getting water and marries him. After the marriage, the weather changes and due to the cold, the food supply of the people is killed. Then Yellow Woman meets Mi-o-chin (the South Wind), who gives her green corn. At last the two forces battle it out, and Mi-o-chin defeats S ho'kee-ah who returns to the North. The Gunn and Pradt versions are very similar to the above version except that in the end, Sho-kee-ah and Mi-o-chin compromise with one ruling one-half of the year (the winter) and the remaining spirit (the summer) ruling the other half of the year.

Still another story dealing with Yellow Woman's identifi-
cation with the moon is recorded by Tyler (1975). In this tale Yellow Woman is killed by witches who cut out her heart and hide it under a water jar. Her body, buried by her brother Arrow Youth, is carried off by the Kachinas to their home (Kachina association). After her death, Arrow Youth is unable to find game (Gamekeeper role). The kachinas cover Yellow Woman's body with a black-bordered white mantle and call on Badger to resurrect her, which he does. He is only partly successful at first because of the missing heart. So for a while Yellow Woman sleeps during the day and stalks at night. Later, after more ceremonial rites, she puts on her dress and now can be seen in the daytime also (Moon references).

There are several stories which deal with Yellow Woman as Moon Mother and game goddess. The story of her as the rabbit huntress has been reported by Lumnis (1894) and Parsons (1931) in similar versions. In the Lumnis version, she is the beauty of the village and an expert huntress who is cornered by a giant on one of her hunting trips. She is rescued by two hunters. In the Parsons version, the hunting story is the same except that the War Twins rescue her. Other tales reported by Gunn deal with her abduction by Buffalo Man and a witch, and her marriage to Ostrats Pau-tum mu and Pusts-Moot.

There is a final version of the Yellow Woman stories which is slightly more involved than the others. In this
version, K'ots cininak'o is gathering wood when she meets Sutsu-nuts, the ruler of the Ka-tsi-na. She marries him and returns to his home, but when she realizes the bread offered to her has been made with human blood, she resolves to escape. With the help of Spider Woman she escapes while going after water. After her escape, she bears twin boys and the three of them are cared for by white crows. When the boys are grown (and they grow miraculously), Yellow Woman sends them to find their grandfather after warning them of the test he will put them through. When the boys find their grandfather, he takes them to his star room where they correctly identify the contents of four bags: on the north wall the Big Dipper, on the west the Pleiades, on the east Orion's Belt, and on the south Scorpion. Their grandfather welcomes them and sends clothing to Yellow Woman. As Yellow Woman and her sons approach her home, her sister cries out and Sutsu-nuts, hearing the cry, carries them away forever.14

Many of Silko's poems are based on the Kochininako abduction stories. Some of the poems deal exclusively with the Yellow Woman of the oral tradition while others blend elements of the oral tradition into a contemporary story.

The two-part poem entitled "Cottonwood" (1981) deals with two such abductions, one woman goes willingly and the other is not totally unwillingly.15 "Part One: Story of the Sun
"House" ties the abduction stories into the role of Yellow Woman as the consort of the Sun. In this section, the scene is the usual abduction tale scene: the cottonwood tree, the sandy wash or stream, and the canyon or ravine. Here Yellow Woman goes in search of the man who is really the Sun and here beneath the cottonwood she finds him. The poem is heavily based on the Laguna oral tradition and the basic story of the love between the Sun and the Moon.

"Part Two: Buffalo Story" is based on the various versions of the Buffalo Man Story. As usual, Kochininako is in search of water when she meets her abductor by the pool in the arroyo. The rest of the tale follows fairly closely the Tyler version above: her husband Arrow Boy (Estoy-eh-mutt) waits for her; Big Star tells him that Buffalo Man took Yellow Woman; Arrow Youth gets help from Grandmother Spider (the Spirit of Reason, Thought-Woman, the Creator) who gives him medicine, "a buckskin pouch full of red clay dust;" Buffalo Man uses hail to try and stop them; Arrow Youth and Yellow Woman hide in a tree and are discovered by a young buffalo; Arrow Boy kills Kochininako because she doesn't want to leave the buffalo. The basic differences are that the guards in the poem are four buffalo and not the beasts of prey, and that the eagle's assistance is omitted. There is also no mention of a second Yellow Woman.

The poem basically relates facts from the oral tradition:
Kochininako, the mistress of game, gives buffalo to the people; Arrow Youth, the great hunter, is the instrument she uses to accomplish this feat. The acceptance by the people of Yellow Woman's gift is present in the poem and the reason behind the Pueblo buffalo hunts:

It was all because
one time long ago
our daughter, our sister Kochininako
went away with them [the buffalo].

A poem in Silko's Storyteller (1981) which deals with the traditional Yellow Woman and the contemporary is "Storytelling." The poem links the past to the present through the continuing stories of abduction or kidnapping; the names and places change but not the basic story:

You should understand
the way it was
back then,
because it is the same
even now.

The next three stanzas deal with the Buffalo Man story: the husband is away hunting deer, the woman walks by the river, Buffalo Man waits for her, she worries about her water jar, and he tells her to place it upside down on the bank. There is nothing new in these stanzas; all the facts are drawn from the old but continuing Yellow Woman stories.

The next stanza, however, definitely deals with the present. In it a husband demands an explanation for his wife's absence of ten months. This contemporary version is presented
in bits and pieces throughout the following four stanzas. The first two stanzas deal with gossip about such an abduction. Silko's concern in these stanzas seems to be to view the alleged kidnapping from as many points of view as possible: the husband's, the neighbors', the parents':

"No! That gossip isn't true.
She didn't elope
She was kidnapped by
that Mexican
at Seama feast.

You know
my daughter
isn't
that kind of girl."19

The last two stanzas in this section present a twisted ironic Yellow Woman tale. The story of the kidnapping is reported on the television. The closing lines provide the twist:

"We couldn't escape them," he told police later.
"We tried, but there were four of them and only three of us."20

A Yellow Woman story in reverse.

The last section of this poem is written in first person and seems to point to a strong identification by the author with Yellow Woman. The speaker is a contemporary Yellow Woman who finds herself continually being enticed away from home and husband. The traditional abduction stories here form the basis for a way of life. The giving nature of Yellow Woman continues into the present.

Another poem, untitled, in Storyteller (1981) deals
with Yellow Woman as the huntress and her rescue from
Estrucuyu by the Twins, Ma' see' wi and Ou'yu'ye'wi. This poem
is based on versions of a story recorded by both Lummis (1894)
and Parsons (1931). The poem relates the tale of Yellow
Woman's encounter with a giant (Estrucuyu) and his demands
to be fed. Yellow Woman gives him her catch of five rabbits,
her bow and arrows, her knife, and, finally, her clothes, but
still the giant doesn't go away. She calls to the Twins for
help, and they decapitate the giant. Then the poem ties in a
particular Laguna location: the Twins throw the giant's heart
away and it becomes a particular stone which lies:

near the river/between Laguna and Paguate/
where the road turns to go/by the railroad tracks/
right around/from John Paisano's place.21

Once again the past has found its way into the present.

Silko's short story "Yellow Woman" (1974) resembles the
Gunn (1917) version of the abduction by the Cliff-Dweller
(see p. 62 above).22 The abductor comes from the north and
leaves her to hunt for fresh meat. Another element of the
traditional tales used in Silko's modern tale is the meeting
by the river. Silko also has her modern-day Yellow Woman
(her abductor Silva calls her by that name) talk about the
old Yellow Woman stories involving Badger and Coyote and
Yellow Woman and the ka'tsina from the north. It is obvious
that the woman in "Yellow Woman" identifies strongly with the
ancient tales of Yellow Woman told to her by her grandfather. She believes them and is tempted to see herself as Yellow Woman. Her abductor says that "someday they will talk about us, and they will say, 'Those two lived long ago when things like that happened.'" The past continues to intermingle with the present and affect the future.

This remark shows the continuation of the stories as clearly as the combining of them in the actual short story itself does. In fact, as the woman returns to her home, she decides "to tell them that some Navajo had kidnapped me, but I was sorry that old Grandpa wasn't alive to hear my story because it was the Yellow Woman stories he liked to tell best."

Another of Silko's works which incorporates elements of the Yellow Woman stories is her first novel Ceremony (1977). The character of Ts'eh, who helps the protagonist Tayo carry out his ceremony, has close links to Yellow Woman. Carol Mitchell (1979) in her article entitled "Ceremony as Ritual" has this to say about the character Ts'eh:

"... Ts'eh seems to be a reincarnation from one of the ancient legends, the living proof that the legends never die, that all time is one time. Ts'eh, then, is Yellow Woman, Ko'chinako. In the traditional legends of the Pueblo, Yellow Woman is the leader of the Corn Maidens and thus associated with fertility, growth, and summer. [There is reference here to the battle of the seasons outlined on p. 65 above.] Clearly the story of Tayo and Ts'eh is the contemporary reenactment of the old myth."

Another traditional story which helps corroborate this
interpretation is "Sutsu-nuts, Ruler of the Ka'tsi-na" and its references to the stars (see p. 67 above). The stars in *Ceremony*, the Big Dipper, are the same as those in that tale. Tayo realizes this after he has nearly completed his journey or story, after Betonie has foretold them and Ts'eh's shield has reproduced their configuration:

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. For each star there was a night and a place; this was the last night and the last place, when the darkness of night and the light of day were balanced.24

Hamilton Tyler (1975) also offers evidence for this interpretation in *Pueblo Animals and Myths*. In one version he relates that Arrow Boy is a good hunter and a friend of Great Star. "After his sister's death [Yellow Woman is his sister] he gets no game, but in this story she is eventually made to live again, even in the daytime. . . . Arrow Youth and Yellow Woman then set out on a journey to Flower Mountain and along the way she gives placenames to points of importance."25

The story continues with Arrow Youth's intentions to hunt, his trip to Table Mountain and his meeting with Mountain-Lion-Man. Arrow Youth, after performing the proper rituals, finds game called forth by Mountain-Lion-Man and drives them back to the pueblo into a stone corral which is under the control of
him and his sister.

There are direct correlations between this story and Tayo's meeting with Ts'eh and her brother and his search for his Uncle Josiah's cattle in Ceremony. Tayo does meet mountain lion on the mountain before he finds the cattle; he is carrying out a ceremony or ritual. Later, he meets the equivalent of Mountain-Lion-Man, Ts'eh's brother, who has killed a deer and is returning home. Uncle Josiah's wild cattle, after being set loose by Tayo, go to the corral at the home of Ts'eh, where she walks among them unafraid.

In Pueblo mythology, there is a large group of myths which center on the activities of Arrow Boy or Youth and his sister, or wife, Yellow Woman. The role of hunter is interchangeable, either Arrow Boy or Yellow Woman can be, but in almost every story Yellow Woman gets into some type of trouble or difficulty. One such tale recorded by Tyler (1975) in Pueblo Animals and Myths, relates the story of Yellow Woman's death by witches. In this tale, the witches cut out her heart and hide it under a water jar. Arrow Youth buries her body without the heart, but wolves carry it off. The kachinas observe this and take the woman they consider their mother to their home at Winimats. While all of this is going on, Arrow Youth is unable to kill his prey. The kachinas cover the body with a white mantle bordered in black and call in badger who partially resurrects her. She is able to walk at night but
because of her missing heart is unable to be seen during the day. After more rites and ceremonies, she puts on her dress and can be seen in the daytime also.  

In another myth recorded by Tyler (1964), Arrow Youth searches for Kochininako's heart after she has been killed at night. Arrow Youth waits all day for her; he seeks the aid of the chief of spirits and, after a search through many places and enduring many events, he finds her heart. "They climbed up and went in (down). At that time Yellow-Woman's head was washed. Then daylight came in the morning. Yellow Woman put on her dress, and so she was alive in the daytime."  

Traces of both of these stories can be seen in association with Tayo and Ts'eh in Ceremony. If the heart of Yellow Woman is viewed as the symbol of love, unity, or harmony, then it applies to Tayo's search for those feelings and his finding them with Ts'eh. Until he finds her "heart," Tayo is unable to perform his ceremony just as Arrow Youth was unable to hunt. The mantle used to cover Yellow Woman is reminiscent of the blanket belonging to Ts'eh and she too disappears only to return again.  

Yellow Woman continues on in the stories of Leslie Silko. Silko has fused a variety of elements and stories from the oral tradition to write a contemporary story, and once again the stories are blended together into a unique continuation of the story-telling tradition.
CHAPTER SIX.
THE DROUGHT CYCLE

The Pueblo mind sees all life as interconnected, like the strands of a spider web, and if one strand of the web is shaken or broken the entire unit is affected. Thus it is that the people perform ceremonies to elicit unity, harmony, and oneness with the world around them. From the beginning, drought has been viewed as an outward sign of disharmony or imbalance. And so it is that many tales in the oral tradition are concerned with the carrying out of a ceremony in order to bring the life-giving rains back to the people. And thus it is that the people are so concerned that all ceremonies connected with the rain are carried out.

Silko's short story "The Man to Send Rain Clouds" (1974) deals with the idea of insuring rain for the people. The Pueblos believe that the clouds are the collective spirits of the dead and they come in from the home of gods and ghosts. "These clouds that come to the center, the village and its fields, bring the rains that feed the life-giving crops. And so a cycle is completed and another transformation made from life to death to life again." Because of this, special care is taken in the final ceremonies for the dead to insure their return in the form of clouds and rain.

Thus it is that when Leon and his brother-in law, Ken,
find Teofilo, they carry out the traditional actions: a small grey feather reminiscent of a rain cloud is tied in Teofilo's hair; his face is painted white, yellow, green, and blue—the colors associated with rain and the north west; corn meal and pollen are thrown into the wind; he is wrapped in a red blanket and admonished, "Send us rain clouds, Grandfather."

There is an important addition to the traditional ceremony in this short story: a priest is asked to sprinkle holy water on the body. After this is done, Leon "felt good because it was finished, and he was happy about the sprinkling of the holy water; now the old man could send them big thunderclouds for sure."

A cycle of drought stories is present in Silko's (1977) novel *Ceremony.* The novel itself relates the story of Tayo, a young mixed-breed attempting to return to the beliefs of his people. Tayo's alienation, caused by his uncertain parentage and his experiences in World War II, is clearly illustrated when he curses the rain in the South Pacific. In his native southwest, rain is something sacred to be honored and when Tayo returns he discovers his home caught in a drought for which he feels responsible. By carrying out the ceremony outlined by Old Betonie, Tayo is able to heal himself and bring the rains back. His return to his heritage helps restore harmony and unity to his world and his people's world.

All told, there are five stories (these are complete
tales; there are many more fragments and combinations) in the cycle of drought stories used in *Ceremony*, ranging from the ancient and traditional to the new and traditional-based. All are interwoven into the basic drought story concerning the protagonist Tayo and all add meaning and hope to the story. The first of the drought stories is presented early in the novel by Silko (1977) in a poem (pp. 12-13). This story is recorded in Gunn (1917) as follows: I-ye-ti-ko (Corn Woman) and I-sto-a-ko-ya (Reed Woman) argue because Corn Woman criticizes Reed Woman for spending all of her time bathing. Reed Woman returns to Shipop and with her go the rains. Corn Woman sends a blue-bottle fly to find her, and when he is unsuccessful, sends a great trailer or tracker who finds Reed Woman at Shipop. She agrees to come back if Corn Woman sends her the clothing she needs. When Corn Woman has completed this ceremony, Reed Woman returns to the land as do the rains. 4

The second story in the cycle deals with the Twins' neglect of the corn altar due to their fascination with a magician (pp. 48-50, 55-56, 74, 86, 110-111, 118-119, 159, 187-189, 268). This poem's story appears to be a combination of two stories which both deal with neglect of the corn altars, once by the Twins and once by the people themselves. White (1930) recorded the story of the neglect by the Twins. In this version the Twins abandon the Corn altar and take the rain with them due to Corn Mother's disinterest in them. Corn
Mother goes looking for them and after five years of searching, she sends a hummingbird after them. The brothers tell the hummingbird they will return in four years, so Corn Woman enlists the aid of the katsinas. Once again a ceremony is carried out and the brothers return with the rain. Another version is recorded by Gunn (1904) in "Records of the Past." In this version Po-chai-an-ny comes from the cane brakes of the north to the people and claims to control the seasons. The people believe him, but he is unable to produce results. Even after they chase him away, the drought remains and the people are forced to move.

The elements from the tale recorded by White (1930) which are incorporated in Silko's poem are neglect of the altars by the Twins, the hummingbird, and the four days/four years reference. From the tale recorded by Gunn (1904), Silko has incorporated the neglect of the altar by the people, and the false weatherman.

Tyler (1979) in Pueblo Birds and Myths records the following drought tale which is also incorporated into Silko's false weatherman story:

During one drought the Fly as well as the Hummingbird were sent as messengers to the Mother. In the Underworld they found that everything was growing beautifully despite the drought above. The Fly kept stopping to eat.

Then spoke Hummingbird, "Don't--let us meet our mother." One must observe a ritual fast if a request to spirits is to succeed. These messengers
bring pollen, beads, and prayer-sticks to offer to her. "I suppose you want something?"—"Yes, we want food and your body and storm clouds." She tells them first to get Turkey Buzzard to purify the town, the earth, and the thunder clouds.

... the two messengers go to Buzzard's home, where they find that their offerings are incomplete (there is no tobacco), so they return to the Mother and ask where it can be found. "There on a hill, there right in the middle is a doorway. There Caterpillar lives. Him you will ask for tobacco." Hummingbird asks Caterpillar for some of his tobacco. This he takes to Buzzard, who smokes to the four directions, to his mothers, to the chiefs, and once more to purify the town. Soon all was well: "Storm cloud, crops, and happiness there around were spread."7

Elements from this traditional tale are clearly reflected in the following lines from Ceremony:

"Fly will go with me," Hummingbird said. 
"We'll go see
What she wants."

They flew to the fourth world below.
Down there
was another kind of daylight
everything was blooming
and growing
everything was so beautiful.

(p. 86)

Fly started sucking on sweet things so
Hummingbird had to tell him to wait:
"Wait until we see our mother."
They found her.
They gave her blue pollen and yellow pollen
they gave her turquoise beads
they gave her prayer sticks.

"I suppose you want something," she said.
"Yes, we want food and storm clouds."
"You get old Buzzard to purify your town first and then, maybe, I will send you people food and rain again."

(pp. 110-111)

They took more pollen, more beads, and more prayer sticks, and they went to see old Buzzard.

They arrived at his place in the east. "Who's out there? Nobody ever came here before." "It's us, Hummingbird and Fly." "Oh. What do you want?"

"We need you to purify our town." "Well, look here. You're offering isn't complete. Where's the tobacco?"

(pp. 118-119)

But there was no tobacco so Fly and Hummingbird had to fly all the way down to the fourth world below to ask our mother where they could get some tobacco.

"We came back again," they told our mother. "Maybe you need something?" "Tobacco."

"Go ask caterpillar."

(p. 159)

The next story in the cycle deals with the Gambler, Kaup'a'ata, and his keeping of the rain clouds. Again Silko seems to have drawn on several tales: Yellow Woman and Sutsu-nuts (see p. 67 above), Kaupat'a as recorded by Benedict (1930), Paus-chun-ni-moot and the Fire Brand Boy as recorded by Gunn (1917). There are details from each in the poem in Ceremony (pp. 178-179). From Yellow Woman and
Sutsu-nuts comes the guessing game about the stars, the Pleiades and Orion's Belt. From the tale recorded by Benedict (1930) come the gambler Kaupat'a, the Sun's son out-gambling the gambler, and the gambler's eyes being cut out and placed in the sky. From the Fire Brand Boy tale come elements similar to the Kaupat'a tale. All of these have been blended into one, one drought story as many drought stories from the Laguna oral tradition have been combined to tell Tayo's modern drought story.

The fourth tale in the drought cycle relates back to the prophecy or curse as the people called it of Oue-o Ka-pe. Gunn (1904) relates the story as follows:

To the west of the village in a house thatched with big leaves lives an old woman by the name of Que-o Ka-pe, who is celebrated for her skill in medicine. The ruler [because there is smallpox in the village] sends his war captain and brings her to the village. She cures his daughter and many others merely by the application of water. The medicine men become jealous of the old woman on account of her skill in overcoming the disease with so simple a remedy when they were powerless with all their incantations. The medicine men hold a consultation and Quo-o Ka-pe is sentenced to be killed, but before the deed is executed she pronounced a curse on them; that misfortune and misery would pursue them relentlessly for generation after generation. This tale ties in with the natural cycle of rain and lack of rain and with Tayo's curse. Tayo cursed the rain and because he has lost touch with the land and his heritage, a drought came to the land:
So he had prayed the rain away, and for the sixth year it was dry; the grass turned yellow and it did not grow. Wherever he looked, Tayo could see the consequences of his praying; the gray mule grew gaunt, and the goat and kid had to wander farther each day to find weeds or dry shrubs to eat (p. 13).

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. Once there had been a man cursed the rain clouds, a man of monstrous dreams (p. 40).

In order to lift the drought, he must return to his native culture and carry out a ceremony which involves stars, a girl, and the cattle. When Tayo completes this ceremony, he knows there will "be storm clouds before noon" (p. 206). Interwoven into this contemporary tale are elements of all the drought tales, hummingbirds, the stars, and the performance of a ceremony. The continuity of the cycle with the help of these images carries the past into the present.
CHAPTER SEVEN.

LESLIE MARMON SILKO: THE PAST AND THE PRESENT

But Ceremony's greatest distinction lies in its structure. An Indian of mixed ancestry, Silko combines European and Indian styles of storytelling: realism and character with legend and archetype. At one point, she has an old medicine man explain to Tayo the care that must be taken with words. "That was the responsibility that went with being human . . . the story behind each word must be told so there could be no mistake in the meaning of what had been said; and this demanded great patience and love." That is the responsibility that goes with being a writer as well, and Leslie Marmon Silko fulfills it beautifully.¹

It is obvious that the oral tradition has great importance for Leslie Silko. This importance is reflected in the pervasiveness of the oral tradition in her literary works and in her life. In an interview with Evers and Carr (1976), she made the following comments about the Laguna oral tradition stories:

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. People tell those stories about you and your family or about others and they begin to create your identity. In a sense, you are told who you are, or you know who you are by the stories that are told about you.²

In an interview with Dexter Fisher (1980) she adds more information concerning the importance of the Laguna oral tradition: "The major influence [on my writing] has been growing up around here [Laguna] and listening to people and to the way the stories just keep coming."³
As Evers wrote in "A Response: Going Along with The Story" (1979): "She [Silko] breathes them [stories]; they are her element. . . . She is first and last a storyteller." And this is reflected in her concern for stories, both past and present, and her interest in the continuum:

I [Silko] see that there has never been any end to the stories. They just keep going on and on. So far, I haven't seen that there are any new ones. There's a need to have a multiplicity of perspectives and tellers. I tell some stories. Simon Ortiz tells others. We need certain tellers to look after certain myths. The ones I'm looking after have always been around. It's part of a continuum. I see it more as a matter that certain people come along and work with the myths that have always been there.

The importance of the oral tradition and its continuum is expressed in Silko's short story "Humaweepi, the Warrior Priest" (1974). This short story centers on the process of passing the oral tradition from one generation to the next. This importance is stressed when Humaweepi realizes his uncle will die someday: "He will be gone and I will be by myself. I will have to do the things he did. I will have to take care of things." Ruoff (1978) says that the story focuses on the importance of the continuum of the oral tradition in both religious instruction and in storytelling. This importance is also stressed in Silko's (1981) new work, Storyteller. In a poem about her Aunt Susie, Silko makes the following statements about stories, storytellers, and the continuum:
She [Aunt Susie] had come to believe very much in books and in schooling. She was of a generation, the last generation here at Laguna, that passed down an entire culture by word of mouth an entire history an entire vision of the world which depended upon memory and retelling by subsequent generations.

She must have realized that the atmosphere and conditions which had maintained this oral tradition in Laguna culture had been irrevocably altered by the European intrusion—principally by the practice of taking the children away from Laguna to Indian schools, taking the children away from the tellers who had in all past generations told the children an entire culture, an entire identity of a people.

And yet her writing went painfully slow because of her failing eyesight And because of her considerable family duties. What she is leaving with us—the stories and remembered accounts—is primarily what she was able to tell and what we are able to remember.

As with any generation the oral tradition depends upon each person listening and remembering a portion and it is together—All of us remembering what we have heard together—that creates the whole story the long story of the people.

As might be imagined, a great many of the pieces in Storyteller deal with the importance of the stories and the storytellers and the continuum from the past to the present. One of the pieces included is the short story "Storyteller" about which Silko said, "My favorite story is one that isn't set in
the Southwest, but I love my characters in it. It's called 'Storyteller,' and it's set in the tundra of Bethel, Alaska. It's a long short story, and it sets out what the relationship of the storyteller to people is.⁹

The relationship is one of respect and caring. The people of the village provide physical sustenance for the old man, the storyteller, and, in turn, for the new storyteller, the narrator of the story. By doing this they not only care for the storyteller, but also keep the stories alive. And in turn the storyteller tells the stories, the truths, and the warnings. "It will take a long time, but the story must be told. There must not be any lies."¹⁰

This relationship described above is one that Silko takes seriously. She as a storyteller feels the need to tell the story, to tell the truths, and issue the warnings, and this feeling is tied up with her immersion in the stories of Laguna.

I remember the stories they used to tell us about places that were meadows full of flowers or about canyons that had wide clear streams. I remember our amazement at these stories of lush areas and running water because the places they spoke of had all changed; the places they spoke of were dry and covered with tumbleweeds and all that was left of the streams were deep arroyos. But I understand now. I will remember this September like they remembered the meadows and streams; I will talk about the yellow beeweeds solid on all the hills, and maybe my grandchildren will also be amazed and wonder what has become of the fields of wild asters and all the little toads that sang in the evening. Maybe after they listen to me talking about this rainy lush
September they will walk over the sandrock at the old house at Dripping Springs trying to imagine the pools of rainwater and the pollywogs of this year.11

And to Silko it is of utmost importance that future generations remember the stories because as the Storyteller says, "With these stories of ours/we can escape almost anything/with these stories we will survive."12

In her review of Ceremony, Ruth Matthewson (1977) states that Leslie Silko "is a 'saver'--of songs, religious rituals, histories, and stories of the Laguna Pueblo Indians of New Mexico."13 It is true that Silko does "save" or record the timeless stories of the Laguna people in her poetry and fiction, but even more than that, she shows the continuum of the stories, the repetition, and the multiplicity. The ancient stories fuse with the present and all become one; and in turn become the future. The modern day Tayo is presented in the age-old role of a culture hero whose trials and quest aid the people; his companion Ts'eh becomes a contemporary Yellow Woman; and a Charlie Coyote emerges who owes his wiles to the earlier Coyote. The story continues with few changes except for the names of the participants. As old Grandma says at the end of Ceremony: "I guess I must be getting old because these goings-on around Laguna don't get me excited anymore. . . . It seems like I already heard these stories before . . . only thing is, the names are different" (p. 273). Silko
shows this continuity by interweaving ancient stories, historical stories, and her imaginative stories, forming the three into one—the continuing storytelling tradition. From the elements of the past, she weaves a unique now and a continuing hope and story for the future.

All of this interweaving with the past, however, does not lessen Silko's role as a contemporary author. Her writing from an American Indian perspective simply enhances her literary efforts. Present in her works are themes, characterizations, and temporal devices which are akin to those of other contemporary authors.

One such theme is alienation—the separation of a character from society. In Silko's novel *Ceremony* (1977), Tayo, the protagonist, feels totally alienated from his people. His experiences in the war have torn him from them as his uncertain parentage helped tear him from his family. His guilt over Rocky and Josiah's deaths only confirms this separation. He must learn the difference between being alone and being lonely. After he reidentifies himself with his heritage, he still must continue to carry out the story alone, but he is not lonely because "the stars had always been with them, existing beyond memory, and they were all held together there" (p. 266). Tayo has reidentified himself with his heritage and his people and now can rejoin his family. This reunion is stated clearly in Auntie's reaction to him. Her attitude has changed from anger,
pity, accusation, and watchfulness, and now "her eyes dropped from his face as if there were nothing left to watch for" (p. 272).

This feeling of isolation is, in many contemporary novels, tied to the idea of guilt. In *Ceremony*, Tayo feels guilty about many things and this sense of guilt helps isolate him further. He feels guilty about his cousin Rocky's death because he promised his aunt that he would take care of Rocky; he feels guilty about Josiah's death because his absence while serving in the Army helped contribute to the factors surrounding Josiah's death; but most of all, he feels guilty because he cursed the rain, the life-giving rain. Only after he eradicates this guilt can Tayo become a member of his society again. Part of this eradication involves finding and returning his Uncle Josiah's cattle.

Inherent in the above themes is the idea of the search for self or the quest for an identity. In *Ceremony*, the quest is both an external and an internal search. The external search (actual physical hunt) is the outward expression of the protagonist's personal quest for an identity or sense of self. Tayo's quest for self takes him to Old Betonie, the half-breed medicine man, and on a search for his Uncle Josiah's cattle. It is there on the mountain after finding and releasing the cattle that he first begins to realize who he is. It is then that he realizes that his earlier "dreams had been
terror at loss, at something lost forever [himself]; but nothing was lost; all was retained between the sky and the earth, and within himself" (p. 229). He knows who he is and where he belongs, and as Ts'eh reminds him, "as long as you remember what you have seen, then nothing is gone" (p. 242).

Silko's characters are well-developed and her characterization of Tayo has earned her well-deserved praise, but it is her female characters which reflect the author's attempts to deal with the changes of the present--the effects of the movement for liberation on the present-day female, in this case the Pueblo female. Primarily, she portrays females who cope with the shifting world and earn respect because of it. In "Lullaby", Ayah copes with the alienation of her children and her husband's drunkenness. She endures with great dignity, thus earning the respect, albeit it grudging, of the people around her.

Silko's characterization of the modern-day Yellow Woman (Kochininako) outlined in Chapter Five is also an attempt to portray the contemporary Native American female. The contemporary Yellow Woman deals with an ever-changing world in a manner drawn from her heritage and this belief in tradition enables her to cope with difficult situations and to survive.

The females in Ceremony are not as well-developed as Ayah or Yellow Woman but they are as interesting. Auntie, Grandmother, Ts'eh, and Laura are all facets of the present
struggle for individual liberty, each choosing her own way in life and each coping with the consequences. Peter Beidler (1977-78) notes that "Ceremony is a magnificent novel. It does what only the best novels do: it brings life to human beings and makes readers care about them." \(^{14}\)

The narrative structure and time sequences that Silko employs are seen by James Ruppert, 1979, to be a reflection of contemporary literature. \(^{15}\) She is successful in escaping linear time with her fragmented approach and because of her familiarity with the concept of time as a circle or hoop, a continuous process never ending.

Wayne Ude, 1979, states:

Sometimes in talking about the European-American novel today, we forget that the whole business of linear time is a problem for the novelist. It certainly was in the twenties and thirties, when Faulkner tried to break out of linear time. He wrote novels in which characters were cut in half . . . . Or you get novels like Ulysses, taking place in a day that takes far longer than a day to read. . . . The main difference between Ceremony and those other novels is that Silko's novel breaks out of linear time so much better than anyone else's novel has ever done. \(^{16}\)

Leslie Marmon Silko is a creative contemporary author who enriches her literary works with a perspective based on her Laguna heritage. This Native American perspective so beneficial to her literary works draws the reader of those works into another culture and offers that reader a different vantage point from which to view the world, and as Silko (1980)
herself says, "there's a need to have a multiplicity of perspectives and tellers." May Silko, the storyteller, continue telling her stories.
NOTES

Chapter One


Chapter Two


8 Feldmann, pp. 54-56.
Chapter Three


4 Goddard, p. 18.


8 Dozier, pp. 133-34.

9 Dozier, p. 133.

10 Dozier, p. 134.


12 Dozier, p. 64.


14 From Gunn, pp. 323-28, 337-43; Dozier, pp. 117, 108; and Dale, p. 245.

15 Eggan, pp. 254-55.

16 Eggan, p. 278.

Chapter Four


2 Radin, p. 254.


7 Tyler, p. 162.

8 Tyler, p. 167.

9 Tyler, p. 172.

10 Tyler, p. 168.


14 Lawrence Evers and Dennis Carr, "A Conversation with Leslie Marmon Silko," Sun Tracks, 3 (Fall 1976), 30.

15 Evers and Carr, p. 30.

16 Parsons, "Laguna Tales," p. 140.


18 Evers and Carr, p. 31.


20 Evers and Carr, p. 30.

21 Silko, Laguna Woman, p. 10.


23 Elsie Clews Parsons, "Spanish Tales from Laguna and Zuni, N. Mex.," Journal of American Folk-Lore, 33 (1920), 47-48. Other versions may be found in Parsons, "Pueblo Indian Folk-Tales, Probably of Spanish Provenience," Journal of American Folk-Lore, 31 (1918), 222-25, 225-56, and 226-27 (This version was told to Parsons by a Marmon).

24 Silko, Storyteller, pp. 254-56.
Chapter Five


Chapter Six


7 Hamilton A. Tyler, Pueblo Birds and Myths (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979), p. 120.


Chapter Seven


2 Lawrence Evers and Dennis Carr, "A Conversation with Leslie Marmon Silko," Sun Tracks, 3 (Fall 1976), 29.


4 Lawrence Evers, "A Response: Going Along with the Story," American Indian Quarterly, 5 (February 1979), 71.


Silko, Storyteller, p. 170.

Silko, Storyteller, p. 247.


Peter G. Beidler, Rev. of Ceremony, American Indian Quarterly, 3 (Winter 1977-78), 358.


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