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Keresan Myth and Tradition in the Writings of Leslie Silko

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This thesis is approved as a creditable and independent investigation by a candidate for the degree, Master of Arts, and is acceptable for meeting the thesis requirements for this degree. Acceptance of this thesis does not imply that the conclusions reached by the candidate are necessarily the conclusions of the major department.

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INTRODUCTION

> 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.[1]

As a child of mixed ancestry growing up on the Laguna Pueblo Indian reservation in New Mexico, Leslie Marmon Silko listened to the elders in her family repeat the tales told and retold since the beginnings of Laguna history. She remembered these stories rich in Pueblo myth and tradition and has herself retold them in poetry, story, and novel. In so doing, she has become a part of "the whole story / the long story of the people."

Born in 1948 in Albuquerque, New Mexico, Leslie Marmon Silko was educated at Laguna and in public schools. She graduated from the University of New Mexico and attended law school, taught in Alaska and at the University of Arizona, and began developing her career as a writer. Her first short story was published in the New Mexico Quarterly in 1969, and in 1974 she received a poetry award from the Chicago Review. Laguna Woman, a collection of eighteen poems dealing with topics ranging from abortion and adultery to ancient Pueblo belief and myth, was published in 1974, the same year that seven of her short stories were anthologized by Kenneth Rosen in The Man to Send Rain Clouds. In 1975 Silko's short story "Lullaby" was chosen as one of the twenty best of the year and included in Martha Foley's Best Short Stories of 1975.

Silko's first novel, Ceremony, the story of an Indian war veteran returned home, was published in 1977. The novel explores the conflicts an Indian of traditional beliefs must face. A grant from the MacArthur Foundation in 1981 enabled Silko to devote herself more fully to her writing, and in that same year her most recently published book, Storyteller, appeared. In this mixture of history and fiction, poetry and short story, Silko uses photographs and autobiographical commentary interspersed with stories, folktales, anecdotes, and poems to create an anthology of Laguna Pueblo life.

Laguna, along with Acoma, is a Western Keres Pueblo, and lies between Albuquerque and Gallup in New Mexico. The town of Laguna is itself of mixed ancestry, having been founded in 1699 by people from surrounding pueblos.[2]

Silko relates that she spent most of her time while growing up on the Laguna reservation with Maria Anaya Marmon, her great-grandmother who married Robert Marmon, a white man.

> Some white men came to Acoma and Laguna a hundred years ago and they fought over Acoma land and Laguna women, and even now some of their descendants are howling in the hills southeast of Laguna.[3]

Great-grandmother Maria Anaya (Grandma A'mooh) told Silko many stories about her own childhood; these stories and those told by others Silko mentions help form the basis for much of her own writing. Of her writing Silko says: "I suppose at the core of my writing is the attempt to identify what it is to be a half-breed or mixed blood

person; what it is to grow up neither white nor fully traditional Indian."[4]

Ever aware of the conflicts of the differing White-Indian cultures, Silko uses her mixed heritage to an advantage in her writing. The influence of Pueblo beliefs and mythology is evident in prose and poetry as well as in her novel, and both play an integral part in shaping her writing as one might assume they have shaped her own life. Silko expresses the depth of her own reverence for Laguna traditions, beliefs, and values when she says: "Above all else, the old people have taught us to value the truth. I value the truth. We are taught to remember who we are: our ancestors, our origins. We must know the place we came from because it has shaped us and continues to make us who we are."[5]

The following chapters show how Silko uses Laguna myth in poetry, short story, novel, and (for want of a better word) autobiography. Her work illustrates that these ancient myths are still relevant to contemporary people of all races.

NOTES

[1]Leslie Marmon Silko, Storyteller (New York: New American Library, Inc., 1977), pp. 6-7.

[2]Vincent Skully, Pueblo: Mountain, Village, Dance (New York: The Viking Press, 1975), p. 245.

[3]Silko, "Toe'osh: A Laguna Coyote Story," in Laguna Woman (Greenfield, New York: Greenfield Review Press, 1974), p. 10.

[4]Silko, Laguna Woman, p. 35.

[5]Silko, "An Old Time Indian Attack in Two Parts," in The Remembered Earth, ed. Geary Hobson (Albuquerque: Red Earth Press, 1979), p. 213.

I. CREATION: THE IMPORTANCE OF TRADITIONS AND STORYTELLING

Central to an understanding of Pueblo life, its traditions and beliefs, is the story of creation, or origin myth. Although through the work of Franz Boas and Elsie Clews Parsons several versions of the emergence have been recorded, Boas admitted that he was unable to obtain the complete origin myth, and doubted that there is a definite sequence to those events which are known.[1] Variations in the sequence of events as well as in the events themselves are apparent among the versions of the individual pueblos, and even in those accounts given by members of the same pueblo; however, a basic outline can be constructed.

Keresan belief holds that we are currently living in the fifth world; there are four worlds below ours: a yellow one, blue, red, and the first world, white. In the first world there was only water and a small piece of land. Ts'its'tsi'nako, or Thought Woman, lived there. She was called Thought Woman because her thoughts became actions; whatever she thought was created.

Nau'ts'ity'i and I'tcts'ity'i appear next. Boas recorded them as sister and brother, noting that all Laguna accounts except that of Mrs. Marmon's recorded by Dr. Parsons transformed the two creator sisters into a sister and brother. This he attributed to Catholic influence, as the Lagunas incorporated the Christian religion into their own.[2] The Acoma myth refers to the pair as sisters, but also reflects Catholic influence in the presence of Uch'tsiti, who according to the spirit Tsichtinako is the father of Nautsisi and Iatiku.[3]

Nau'ts'tiy'i and I'tcts'ity'i create man, and everything else develops in this first world. I'tcts'ity'i then divides water and land and makes the earth above beautiful with wild plants to prepare it for his people. Because all is in darkness, I'tcts'ity'i takes out the sun and places it in each direction, finally finding the east satisfactory. When all else is ready, I'tcts'ity'i sends out the people who emerge from the underground to live in the upper world, above ground.

After their people reach the upper world, I'tcts'ity'i, father of the Whites, and Nau'ts'ity'i, mother of the Indians, quarrel. I'tcts'ity'i claims to be more powerful, so the two have a series of contests. In the final conflict their children run a race around the world. I'tcts'ity'i's children are drowned, and weeds collect in their hair and on their faces. (For this reason Whites have beards and must cut their hair.) I'tcts'ity'i leaves with his children toward the east, predicting his future return when his people will take away the land.

Nau'ts'ity'i's children settle at White-House where they prosper until Pa'caya'nyi, the son of Old-Woman Ck'o'yo, comes from Reed-Leaf-House. He asks for Ma'see'wi and Uyu'ye'wi, the War Twins who are in charge of the altars and the sacred ear of corn. Pa'caya'nyi uses magic to persuade the people to accept his ways, which go against the rules of Nau'ts'ity'i. She becomes angry, hides the food, and the people begin to starve. They are saved through the efforts of Fly and Hummingbird who take presents of beads,

prayersticks, and pollen to Nau'ts'ity'i who has gone down to the first world where everything is green. She tells them something is still missing, and they return to get the missing item, tobacco. In one version Hummingbird and Fly are sent to Nau'ts'ity'i to Old-Turkey-Buzzard to ask him to purify the town. They take him the gifts; he asks for tobacco, which they get; he in turn purifies the town.[4]

In the Acoma version an evil spirit, a serpent, comes to life during creation. This snake tempts Nautsisi and the two sisters begin to quarrel. Nautsisi becomes pregnant and bears twin sons. Because the sisters have disobeyed him and sinned, Uch'tsiti (their father) takes Tsichtinako away from them. Despite this, the sisters live happily with Iatiku raising the child that Nautsisi disliked. Eventually the two separate, each taking her own children with the understanding that some day they will meet again.[5]

While details in the various accounts may vary considerably, the basic story line remains the same. Ts'its'tsi'nako (Tsichtinako, Sus'sistinako, or Tse Che Nako), also referred to as Thought Woman or Grandmother Spider, is the creator of all, the storyteller who, as she spins the story, creates. Life centers on her and she is the one to whom the people look for guidance and sustenance. For the Keres people I'tcts'ity'i, the Corn Mother, may be the alter ego of Ts'its'tsi'nako. Together they form the matriarchy of the Keresan, the life-giving force of the people.

Other symbols of life include the hummingbird and fly, who helped rescue the people from drought; water and the sun, which are necessary to all living things; the cottonwood tree, which is a sign of water; and the color yellow, the color of sunlight. Yellow is also the color of the north, the direction of We nima'tse, the home of the kachina or spirits, and also the direction from which Ts'its'tsi'nako is believed to reappear.

In her early writing, Leslie Silko explores the very beginnings of her people. "Slim Man Canyon" deals with the idea that life (or nature at least) is essentially the same as it was seven hundred years ago when her ancestors lived. She describes the life forces of water and sun: "water was running gently / and the sun was warm." She uses the cottonwood tree and horses (essential to early Indian life) as living things that connect the past with the present. "The rhythm / the horses feet moving strong through / white deep sand," gives an impression of continuing motion (life). She closes with the idea that it is the same as it was:

> Where I come from is like this
> the warmth, the fragrance, the silence.
> Blue sky and rainclouds in the distance
> we ride together
> past cliffs with stories
> and songs
> painted on rock.
> 700 years ago.[6]

and that she rides with her ancestors, the "we" referring to the rainclouds and the Pueblo belief that the spirits of ancestors return as thunderclouds to bring rain to help their people.

Silko's universal concept of her ancestry in "Prayer to the Pacific" (LW pp. 23-24) refers to the theory that Indians came from Asia more than thirty thousand years ago by crossing areas of dry land which connected the two continents, or by crossing short distances of water by riding huge sea turtles. A feeling of ceremonialism emanates from the poem as Grandfather Turtle rolls four times, perhaps indicating the four beginning worlds, or reflecting the Pueblo tradition of giving thanks to the four directions.

Silko describes the ocean as being as "Big as the myth of origin." She refers to Ocean, who she says was herself born in China as sister spirit of Earth, emphasizing her own feeling of relationship to the ocean and its beginnings through her relationship with the Mother Earth. She further strengthens this with the idea that the raindrops, a gift of Pueblo ancestors, come "clear from China." This idea of "oneness" of all people is reiterated in Ceremony when Tayo is unable to shoot the Japanese soldiers because he sees his Uncle Josiah in their faces: "even white men were darker after death. There was no difference when they were swollen and covered with flies." Old Betonie later explains to him, "'It isn't surprising you saw him with them. You saw who they were. Thirty thousand years ago they were not strangers.'"[7]

The idea of oneness is not restricted to human beings, but includes all of nature: animals, birds, plants, trees, and all things present on earth. Pueblo belief holds that man must be in harmony with nature. To obtain and maintain this balance the prescribed

traditions and ceremonies must be observed. Man is not in control of nature, rather man belongs to nature. As Old Betonie tells Tayo, "It is the people who belong to the mountain." (C p. 134) The wildlife is an equal part of nature that man must respect. Silko shows this in her description of the horses in "Horses at Valley Store." (LW p. 32) The people may come for the water, but it is the horses that bring the people. Without the animals the people would not be there; the animals, not the people, are in control. As Silko warns of the snake in "The Time We Climbed Snake Mountain," "don't step on the spotted yellow snake / he lives here. / The mountain is his."[8] The animals are as much a part of life as are the people.

"Hawk and Snake" (LW p. 30) is an interesting poem that describes the earth from an eagle's perspective. Homage is paid to the snake "coiled on his rocks / peering out at me from the shade," and the hawk "soaring / silent arcs above the canyon." A feeling of complete unity much like that which Tayo experiences on his trip with Old Betonie to the Chuska Mountains is created. Like Tayo, who sees the "plateaus and canyons spread out below him like clouds falling into each other past the horizon," the eagle sees the sky "blue beyond all else / blue, light / above the pale red earth." In Ceremony Silko writes, "The world below was distant and small; it was dwarfed by a sky so blue and vast the clouds were lost in it." Up on top of the mountain Tayo can no longer see the "signs of what had been set loose upon the earth ['witchery']: the highways, the towns, even the fences were gone." (C p. 146) He is at what he feels is a special place:

the highest point on the earth, a point from which he sees the earth much as does the eagle that sweeps "high above the hills / on brown spotted wings," to return to his watchful perch assured that all is as it should be.

"In Cold Storm Light" (LW p. 28) is a poem about snow elk and winter that exudes an air of reverence for both the animate and inanimate. The stillness created in the first two stanzas foretells something majestic: expectation is fulfilled when the snow elk, members of the deer family, appear. Keresan myth tells of a chief's daughter who bears a son on the journey to White-House. She abandons the baby and tells her father it died. A deer finds the child, takes it, and raises it. When the boy grows to manhood and begins to question why he is not like the rest, his surrogate father, fearing that his son might reproduce with another deer, arranges to return him to his mother and his grandfather, the Indian chief.[9] This myth exemplifies the importance of the deer to the Keresan. Just as the deer sustained life in the boy, it is a primary source of sustenance for the Pueblo. In Silko's poem the snow elk disappear as quickly as they appear, yet the reverence for them is unmistakable in the poem.

In "Sun Children," (LW p. 29) Silko contrasts the symbols of fall: north wind, dying spiders, winter light, ice, yellow cattails, frozen water, and swirling snow, with those of spring: warm wind, yellow flowers, ducks singing, and sunrise. This is not only an exercise in poetics, it is also a celebration of life and a tribute to the god who presides over the seasons, and who, together with the

moon, sets the calendar. Like Silko's poem, the Pueblo year is divided into two parts, one of dormancy and one of growth.[10] The final lines in the poem signify new life and new beginnings which come from the sun and grow "inside us / around us."

The fragility of life is expressed in "POEM FOR MYSELF AND ME: Concerning Abortion," (LW pp. 6-7) a four part reflection on abortion. In the first part Silko uses the image of morning sun and butterflies to signify the beginning of life. In Keresan mythology butterflies are closely associated with Paiyatemu, a frivolous demigod of the Sun father, who is allowed to do just as he pleases. He is representative of the power of fertility, and was himself conceived when a beam of sunlight fell on his mortal mother as she slept. He is usually pictured as being surrounded by myriads of butterflies.[11] For the Hopi butterflies are "pets of Muyingwu," the germination god.[12] These fragments of summer, butterflies, symbolize conception.

Part two is marked by solemnity; winter is a time when all evidence of life is absent; it is a time of healing before making new beginning; a time of dormancy. Part three is a return to normalcy; even when there is a death, the rest of life goes on. Reflection is the final phase; like the butterflies that die "softly / against the windshield," without an utterance of protest, so die the unborn. All that remains is the memory, like the irridescent wings that "flutter and cling / all the way home."

Death is a natural part of life; unnatural death such as that by abortion may cause sorrow or regret, but natural death is merely

another part of the life process. "Preparations," (LW p. 33) a poem about this death process, though quite graphic in implied description, shows death as an acceptable chain in the life cycle. Even the carrion in the poem are an important and acceptable part of the chain. Death is not something to be feared as an end to life, but rather to be accepted as a new beginning, another part of the story. As long as the story remains, nothing is ever lost; love outdistances death. (C p. 230) The story is most important for those who do not return:

> 'In this way
> we hold them
> and keep them with us forever
> and in this way
> we continue.' (ST p. 247)

Silko's early poetry indicates clearly that the ceremonies and traditions of her people are important to her. Additionally, some of her short stories written about the same time deal with this importance of tradition and the conflicts that arise when traditionalism is challenged. In "from Humaweepi, the Warrior Priest," Silko tells the story of a young boy raised by his uncle, a Pueblo priest. Though his uncle teaches him daily about the seasons, plants and animals, songs, chants and prayers, Humaweepi does not realize he is being taught. At age nineteen he tells his uncle it seemed he had learned the names of everything; his uncle's reply, "'That's what a priest must know,'" brings the realization to Humaweepi, "Someday he will die. . . . 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."[13]

Humaweepi's uncle emphasizes that human beings are "special," and that they are taught to be what they are. Through oral tradition Humaweepi has been taught all that he must know as a priest. As Frank Applegate in Indian Stories from the Pueblos points out, "Only the cacique or high priest of a pueblo has a complete understanding of the religious beliefs of his village, and he imparts this knowledge only to his acolytes, one of whom is to succeed him when he dies."[14] Failure to pass on this knowledge would mean that these traditions and rituals would die out.

In the second part of the story, Humaweepi, himself now the priest, assumes the role of storyteller; like his uncle before him, he is handing down tradition. In focusing on the importance of oral tradition in the first part, and storytelling in the second, Silko illustrates the importance of both to the preservation of Indian tradition. In so doing, she herself plays a role in its preservation, and assumes the role of storyteller.

Further evidence of the importance of Pueblo tradition is found in "The Man to Send Rain Clouds," the story of a Pueblo family's observance of funeral rituals. Silko also introduces in this story the idea of a need to adapt traditions to new circumstances. When Grandfather Teofilo is found dead at the sheep camp, his grandsons gather the scattered sheep, and then attend to the prescribed rituals. They tie a feather in the old man's hair, and paint his face: a streak of white on the forehead and blue on the cheekbones. After sprinkling corn meal and pollen, yellow is painted under his nose and

green across his chin, the colors indicating he is probably a member of the water clan.[15] He is later dressed in a new shirt and pants, and wrapped in a red shawl.

Not until the funeral is nearly over, the corn meal and pollen sprinkled to make a prayer and to show Teofilo his way on the Sun Trail, and the old men with their candles and medicine bags gone, is the priest summoned to sprinkle holy water on the grave. Here the Pueblo family seeks to strengthen Indian ritual by incorporating a chosen part of the Christian ritual. A. LaVonne Ruoff points out, "Silko emphasizes that these Pueblo Indians have not abandoned their old ways for Catholicism; instead, they have taken one part of Catholic ritual compatible with their beliefs and made it an essential part of their own ceremony."[16] Although the priest has not given the Last Rites which he points out are necessary for a Christian burial, he is compelled by his own sense of obligation to bless Teofilo with the sprinkling of holy water. To Teofilo's family the water is much more than just a blessing; it assures them that Grandfather will be able to send them abundant rain from the spirit world. By their adherence to the prescribed ritual, his death assures goodness in their lives.

While the story of Humaweepi stresses the importance of tradition, and Teofilo that of adaptation, Silko's story "Lullaby" illustrates the effects of forcing Native Americans to choose between traditionalism and modernity. The story is of Ayah, a proud Navajo woman whose life has become memories. Her children are gone: Jimmie

dead in a white man's war, Ella and Danny taken by white doctors and BIA policemen to go to school and become part of the white man's culture. Now her life is reduced to mechanics: the monthly trip with Chato to Ceboletto for the check and the yearly planting of the garden, rituals performed not because there is a reason, but because it is time to do those things. Her life was not always this way, but reservation life has taken away all that was; her purpose in life, her children, are no longer her responsibility. Truthfully she has no purpose and no real life.

She was proud to be able to sign her name; she did not know she was signing away the lives of her children and also her own, for she could not read. Her limited knowledge of the white culture turned against her; "it was like the old ones always told her about learning their language or any of their ways: it endangered you." (ST p. 47).

Ayah represents the victims of two cultures; no longer does the culture of her birth exist, nor is she able to become a part of the new. The inability to adapt new ways to the old has destroyed the natural harmony necessary in life.

Nowhere in the writing of Leslie Silko is the Pueblo belief in the importance of tradition and the strength in unity and harmony in one's life more obvious than in Ceremony, her first novel. Ceremony is the story of Tayo, a mixed-breed Indian war veteran who has returned home a fractured individual. Using the creation myth as a supportive pre-text, Silko weaves her own story of Tayo's return to physical and emotional harmony through a rediscovery of traditional beliefs.

The name Tayo may itself hold a special significance. Helen Addison Howard in her book American Indian Poetry states that "A single Indian word may represent an idea whose expression in English would require a whole sentence. These ideas must either be interpreted against a background of myth or legend, or be supplemented by music, chants, and dance postures and gestures."[17] Hayden Carruth in a commentary about the novel suggests that Silko may have had in mind the word tao, meaning "way," indicating that Tayo needs to find his way.[18] Kenneth Lincoln writes that "Tayo's name-story rises from the sun bird's dawn song, "T^{Y}OWI T^{Y}OWI KAYO KAYO," to reintegrate a split Laguna personality and cultural schism."[19]

Boas relates the legend of Tayo, a man who flies with his eagle to the north below where Old-Woman-Spider lives.[20] The Hopi song the eagle sings while flying may relate the Keresan myth to the Hopi Snake myth. In this myth a prestigious youth, Ti'yo, becomes doubtful of the gods' care for his people. They are without rain and their crops are poor, so Ti'yo seeks to find the reason. In a search for the source of life he embarks on a journey down the great river. He faces many hazards, but is helped by the Snake Virgin with whom he sleeps. In one version of the myth he meets the Sun, sleeps with the earth goddess Huruing Wuhti (Hard Beings Woman or Spider Grandmother), and overcomes monsters with the help of Spider Woman's magic. Ti'yo returns as "a hero, bringing confirmation of the gods' care, and authentication for the sacred ceremonies." Silko's Tayo is much like Ti'yo. He too has doubts of the effectiveness of tradition and

ritual. Only through his own journey back to unity with his Indian heritage does he achieve harmony in his life and regain his lost belief.

In Ceremony Silko uses poems built on Keresan myths to intensify the narrative. As pointed out by Charles Larson, these poems "fall into three separate stages--an invocation, a central body or story with its own thematic variations, and a resolution--all three divisions running parallel to the main prose narrative."[22] While Larson may be correct in this stylistic evaluation of the poems, his further analysis that Ts'its'tsi'nako is a persona of Silko as singer of the song ignores the mythological background of Ts'its'tsi'nako. Silko is not the progenitor of Thought Woman; according to Keresan myth, the exact opposite is the case. Carol Mitchell in "Ceremony as Ritual" explains: "After the story of the Creation comes the ceremonial explanation of the connection between stories and ceremony. The stories are not just entertainment, they are the heritage of a people, they validate the traditions of the culture, they make the past come alive in the present, and they reassure that the past will continue into the future."[23]

Silko begins Ceremony by establishing Ts'its'tsi'nako (Thought Woman-Grandmother Spider) as creator. She creates her sisters Nau'ts'ity'i and I'tcts'ity'i who help create everything including the four worlds below the present. She is the one thinking (creating) the story that Silko is telling. (C p. 1) As she spins her web, the story unfolds. The web image itself is usually positive and indicates

a weaving together of tradition and kinship unifying spiritual realities with those of every day life. (A cobweb, on the other hand, represents confusion, disorder, and even death.) Susan Scarberry explains that in American Indian cultures "Grandmother Spider is said to weave the web of life and spin the threads of the old way, which, in turn, bear upon the new ways. Although the spider by its spinning and killing symbolizes the alternation of the forces of creation and destruction on which life depends, the web itself represents wholeness, balance and beauty. The web in its circularity and durability suggests the continuity of a living tradition."[24]

The web image is present throughout all of the novel. Tayo's memories are "tangled with the present, tangled up like colored threads from old Grandma's wicker sewing basket." (C p. 6) The harder he tries to untangle the strands, the more his story becomes tangled and mixed up. His story is like the web that has been damaged and he becomes more certain that the old stories are true: "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." (C p. 40) The fragmentation of Tayo's own life directly affects the lives of others.

Before the war Tayo had believed in the stories. Even when the teachers at school told him they were nonsense, he believed. During that last summer before the war he rode to a narrow canyon to pray for rain. The rituals he followed were those he imagined the cloud priests had used to call the thunderclouds. He saw Spider (who

in Keresan myth knew the secret to releasing the imprisoned rain clouds) and Hummingbird, and knew that as long as they had not abandoned the people life would go on. His belief was rewarded when rain came "spinning out of the thunderclouds like gray spider webs and tangling against the foothills of the mountain." (C p. 100) His belief went with him to war where his role was to make "a story for all of them, a story to give them strength." (C p. 11) But Rocky's death changed it all; Tayo's story for strength became an incantation damning the rain and praying for a cloudless sky. He turned from the traditions and chose not to remember--remembering brought pain.

Here Silko presents a paradox: for Tayo remembering brings pain because it means he must face the reality of Rocky's death, but it is memory that makes the story live. Even though Rocky was not himself a believer, as long as the people remember him, he is not really dead. This for Tayo becomes the "accident of time and space." (C p. 28) Rocky still holds a place in his family's life; his presence is felt on the sports page and in Grandma's heater his money has provided. It is Tayo who has no place in their lives. He does not belong and he cannot fill the void he feels Rocky left. The full impact of this becomes evident with the realization as he lies on Rocky's bed: "all the years of Rocky's life had made contours and niches that Tayo's bones did not fit." (C p. 31) But Tayo is not meant to fill Rocky's place. He has his own place in life, and this is what Tayo must come to realize.

Like the twin son Nautsiti disliked and gave to Iutiku to raise, Tayo was given by his mother to Auntie. By blood he is part of both the Indian and White cultures, but he belongs in neither. Like Silko herself, Tayo represents a fusion of ancestries, living testimony to old ways evolving into new. Rocky, the full-blood who one would expect to embrace the beliefs of his culture, represents the modern Indian who rejects traditional ways for the more modern White ways. He "understood what he had to do to win the White outside world," and he "deliberately avoided the old-time ways," (C p. 53) calling them superstition. Auntie accepted this from Rocky, for the white world was his chance to be a success, and with his success would come her own.

Rocky's adoption of the White world as his own leads to an acceptance of the war as his. He tells Tayo, "But, Tayo, we're supposed to be here. This is what we're supposed to do." (C p. 8) But for Tayo the war is a living hell. He sees the face of Josiah on the corpse of the dead Japanese soldier; he realizes that in death one man is no different from another, even their skin looks the same. "There was no difference when they were swollen and covered with flies. That had become the worst thing for Tayo: they looked too familiar even when they were alive." (C p. 7)

Tayo cannot accept Rocky's explanation of his hallucinations, nor can he understand Rocky's passive acceptance of a war that is not his. Tayo damns the rain, the war, and the insects. His words become a chant, an evil force growing within him that gives him strength

against the very forces that are the lifelines of his own people. Like Corn Woman, who caused the rain to go away by scolding and quarreling with Reed Woman, Tayo believes he has caused the drought. "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. . . ." (C p. 13) The delicate balance of man and nature has been destroyed and Tayo believes he is the cause of its destruction. He remembers what Josiah told him about not swearing at the wind and dust, or the sun and sky, because they are all part of life. "The old people used to say that droughts happen when people forget, when people misbehave." (C p. 47)

Like the twin heroes Ma'see'wi and Ou'yu'ye'wi, Rocky and Tayo both reject traditional Pueblo beliefs and are punished. Rocky's punishment is physical death, Tayo's a figurative death. He has lost those he loves, Rocky and Josiah, and even himself. Only through exorcising his guilt and restoring harmony in his own life can Tayo gain forgiveness. The only cure for Tayo is a good ceremony.

But Tayo resists. He doesn't want to remember. Like the sunlight (symbol of life) that "collapsed into his thoughts like pale gray cobwebs," (C p. 19) remembering makes him sick and he vomits. He cannot face life. "It took a great deal of energy to be a human being, and the more the wind blew and the sun moved southwest, the less energy Tayo had." (C p. 26) Symbolically, Tayo has no strength to face the crises as his life goes on.

Old Man Ku'oosh brings Tayo blue corn meal and Indian tea (a bundle of stalks, like prayer sticks used in ceremonies) and tells him, "'There are some things we can't cure like we used to, not since the white people came.'" (C p. 39) Betonie further reinforces Ku'oosh's words with the idea that the old ways are ineffective and proposes that the people must adapt them to new circumstances. "'The people nowadays have an idea about the ceremonies. They think the ceremonies must be performed exactly as they have always been done. . . . But long ago when people were given these ceremonies, the changing began, if only in the aging of the yellow gourd rattle or the shrinking of the skin around the eagle's claw, if only in the different voices from generation to generation, singing the chants. You see, in many ways, the ceremonies have always been changing.'" (C p. 132)

Silko proposes that the strength of the people lies not in tradition alone, but in the ability to adapt these traditions to life. By remembering the ceremonies and rituals and using them to add meaning and harmony to one's life, the power of the people is assured. Susan Scarberry summarizes: "Since memory is a repository for the cultural traditions of a given people, the act of recollection benefits not only individual beings but the collective as well. Memory insures the preservation of tribal heritage."[25]

In Storyteller, described by N. Scott Momaday as a "rich, many faceted book," a "mélange" in which there are "moments of considerable beauty and intensity, moments in which, according to the central tenet of storytelling, the language is celebrated,"[26] Silko teaches

tradition by telling her own story. This mixture of short story, verse, and expository narrative is a legacy to her people. Just as her ancestors taught through oral tradition, Silko modifies the tradition into written story. She says, "It's stories that make this into a community. There have to be stories. That's how you know; that's how you belong; that's how you know you belong."[27]

Silko begins by asserting that storytelling has always been important to the Laguna people. Like the photographs that are part of the stories, storytelling is serious business; not just anyone can be trusted with the responsibility. Through the stories, an entire culture, its history and vision, have been passed down by word of mouth. It is this telling--"all of us remembering what we have heard together--that creates the whole story." (C pp. 6-7) The title story of the book "establishes the theme of cultural conflict that dominates the book."[28] It opens with a nameless Eskimo woman in jail. Her parents poisoned by drinking alcohol supplied by the Gussuck storekeeper, she has lived her life with her grandmother and an old man. While the foundation of the story is the Inuit myth of Takanakapsaluk, keeper of the game and key to Eskimo survival, rather than Keresan myth, the message is universal: blood will out; truth will be known.[29]

Neither the policeman nor the priest believed the grandmother when she told them the storekeeper had poisoned the girl's parents; the priest's inaction stilled what little belief the old woman had. It is not spoken of again until the girl is old enough to question the

little she remembers. With remembrance comes regeneration; the story must be told. She hears the words of her grandmother, "It will take a long time, but the story must be told. There must not be any lies." (ST p. 26)

The girl has only her own shrewdness and the rapacious greed of the Gussucks to accomplish her revenge. Like the old man who tells his story to create warmth in the arctic cold, the Gussucks have used her. Sex is her weapon to lure the storekeeper to his death. With the coincidental deaths of the storekeeper and the old man (storyteller par excellence) the girl becomes the storyteller. Rejecting her Gussuck attorney's defense that the storekeeper's death was an accident, she faces her punishment, accepting the responsibility as it is: "'I will not change the story, not even to escape this place and go home. I intended that he die. The story must be told as it is.'" (ST p. 31)

For Silko, telling the story as it is involves more than just a recital of factual information. Vital to the story is an understanding of the people, their background and customs. Laguna culture, she says, was "irrevocably altered by the European intrusion," (ST p. 6) an intrusion that involved persecution of Indian families (especially those that were interracial), and slavery of the Navajo people. She tells of the origin of the Laguna Feast, during which time Navajo families would bring gifts to exchange with Laguna families. The story told by Grandma A'mooh was that Navajos took a herd of Laguna sheep, but the Laguna men caught up with them. When

asked why they had stolen the sheep, the Navajos replied that it was because their people had nothing to eat. The Lagunas told them that the next time they should come and ask for it. "At Laguna Feast time, on September 19, Navajo people are welcome at any Laguna home regardless of whether they are acquainted or not." (ST p. 210)

"Storytelling," a humorous adaptation combining ideas related in "Buffalo-Man," a Keresan myth in which Yellow Woman is abducted while her husband Arrow-Youth is hunting deer,[30] and "Ts'its'inits'," the story of an abduction that results in the birth of twin boys,[31] shows how societal changes effect changes in storytelling, and emphasizes the importance of telling a good story. Traditional roles of abductor and victim are reversed:

> 'We couldn't escape them,' he told police later.
> 'We tried, but there were four of them and only
> three of us.' (ST p. 96)

Modern myths are ridiculed:

> 'You know
> my daughter
> isn't
> that kind of girl.' (ST p. 96)

The story isn't accepted, but the teller concedes:

> It was my fault and
> I don't blame him either.
> I could have told
> the story
> better than I did. (ST p. 98)

Clearly, it is the responsibility of the storyteller to make the story live.

"The Storyteller's Escape" is "remembered as her best story." (ST p. 247) The old teller knows all the escape stories; this story

is her own. Pursued by the enemy, the people flee the village for safety. The teller realizes this may be the end for her; she knows she is getting old and cannot move as quickly as needed. "But sooner or later / even a storyteller knows it will happen." (ST p. 249) Her concern is that there won't be anyone to tell the others. She thinks how it would be if there was someone to look back and tell the others: "So I just might as well think of a story / while I'm waiting to die: / A'moo'ooh, the child looked back." (ST p. 250) Like Ts'its'tsi'nako, by thinking the old teller creates someone to tell her story, someone to become the teller. "About this time / the sun lifted off from her shoulders like a butterfly." (ST p. 252) Here Silko skillfully switches the role of the storyteller to the child. Symbolically the sun is life; the old teller has died. This idea is strengthened as the child thinks of the enemy: "Maybe the sun got to be too much for them too." (ST p. 253) The child is left to tell the escape story for the old teller, "This is the story she told, / the child who looked back." (ST p. 253)

Silko's use of the pronoun "she" makes careful reading of the story essential for understanding. It also emphasizes the importance of oral tradition, for voice inflection together with facial expression and gestures would more clearly illuminate the meaning. The use of "A'moo'ooh, the Laguna expression of endearment (ST p. 34), reminds her reader that Silko called her own grandmother "Grandma A'mooh," and may in fact see herself as the child in the story. Storytelling is to generate and perpetuate life. Whether it is written or oral, as long

as the process continues, life and the traditions that go along with it will continue.

> 'With these stories of ours
> we can escape almost anything
> with these stories we will survive.' (ST p. 247)

NOTES

[1]Franz Boas, Keresan Texts (New York: The American Ethnological Society, 1928), p. 217.

[2]Boas, p. 221.

[3]Alan R. Velie, ed., American Indian Literature (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979), p. 13.

[4]Boas, pp. 228-37.

[5]Velie, pp. 25-28.

[6]Leslie Marmon Silko, Laguna Woman (Greenfield, New York: Greenfield Review Press, 1974), p. 17. (Hereafter indicated in text by LW.)

[7]Leslie Marmon Silko, Ceremony (New York: New American Library, Inc., 1977), p. 7; p. 130. (Hereafter indicated in text by C.)

[8]Leslie Marmon Silko, Storyteller (New York: Seaver Books, 1981), p. 77. (Hereafter indicated in text by ST.)

[9]Boas, pp. 35-38.

[10]Hamilton A. Tyler, Pueblo Gods and Myths (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964), p. 161.

[11]Tyler, Pueblo Gods and Myths, p. 143.

[12]Hamilton A. Tyler, Pueblo Birds and Myths (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979), p. 34.

[13]Leslie Marmon Silko, "from Humaweepi, the Warrior Priest," in The Man to Send Rainclouds, ed. Kenneth Rosen (New York: Random House, Inc., 1975), p. 165.

[14]Frank Applegate, Indian Stories from the Pueblos (Glorieta, New Mexico: The Rio Grande Press, Inc., 1971), preface 5.

[15]Boas, p. 295.

[16]A. LaVonne Ruoff, "Ritual and Renewal: Keres Traditions in the Short Fiction of Leslie Silko," Melus, 5, No. 4 (1978), p. 5.

[17]Helen Addison Howard, American Indian Poetry (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1979), p. 21.

[18]Hayden Carruth, "Harmonies in Time and Space," Harper's Magazine, June 1977, p. 80.

[19]Kenneth Lincoln, Native American Renaissance (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), p. 235.

[20]Boas, pp. 146-47.

[21]Tyler, Pueblo Gods and Myths, pp. 240-44.

[22]Charles R. Larson, American Indian Fiction (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1978), p. 158.

[23]Carol Mitchell, "Ceremony as Ritual," American Indian Quarterly, 5, No. 1 (1979), p. 28.

[24]Susan J. Scarberry, "Grandmother Spider's Lifeline" in Studies in American Indian Literature, ed. Paula Gunn Allen (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1983), p. 104.

[25]Susan J. Scarberry, "Memory as Medicine: The Power of Recollection in Ceremony," American Indian Quarterly, 5, No. 1 (1979), p. 19.

[26]N. Scott Momaday, "The Spirit in Words," The New York Times Book Review, 24 May 1981, p. 8.

[27]Leslie Marmon Silko, This Song Remembers, Jane B. Katz, ed., (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1980), p. 190.

[28]James Polk, "Books: 'Storyteller'," Saturday Review, 8, No. 5 (1981), p. 72.

[29]Lincoln, p. 225.

[30]Boas, pp. 122-27.

[31]Boas, pp. 259-60.

II: WITCHES AND WITCHERY

The dualistic nature of Pueblo belief logically lends itself to the existence of witches and witchery in historical and contemporary Pueblo mythology. Although the stories are not as abundant among Laguna as in other tribes, nonetheless the witchery element is present. Witchery may be defined as a "malignant force that has been unleashed on the world,"[1] whose purpose is to destroy the relationships that people have with one another. Silko explains it in Ceremony by contrasting Indian religion with Christianity. The old ways stressed the importance of the clan, the working together for the welfare of all. "Christianity separated the people from themselves; it tried to crush the single clan name, encouraging each person to stand alone, because Jesus Christ would save only the individual soul; Jesus Christ was not like the mother who loved and cared for them as her children, as her family."[2] Christianity focuses on the saving of the individual rather than the group and this tends to disrupt the unity which is the basis of tribal life.

It would be a misconception in the understanding of Pueblo mythology to say that the Whites are the witchery. While the myths as related by Boas designate Nau'ts'it'i as mother of the Indians and I'tc'ts'it'i as father of the Whites, no reference to the concept of Whites as being witches is made. (Most probably this is a modern adaptation resulting from the White persecution of Indians.) In the Acoma myth of creation the concept of evil is manifested in the form of a serpent that "came to life itself and with power of its own,"

without the knowledge of Iatiku, Nautisisi or Tsichtinako. This snake tempts Nautisisi who sins, becomes pregnant, and bears twin sons. Iatiku cares for the child Nautsiti dislikes and ultimately the two sisters separate, which results in the development of the two separate races, Indian and White.[3] Silko explains in Ceremony, "This world was already complete / even without white people. / There was everything / including witchery." (C p. 139) The Whites are a creation of the witchery rather than being witchery. Although the witchery may be more strongly manifested in the Whites, it may afflict anyone.

The first evidence of witchery in Pueblo mythology as related by Boas is found in the myth of P'acay'n'i, an evil magician who professes to be a Ck'o'yo shaman. Through magic he induces the people to turn from their prescribed ceremonies and rituals to follow his ways which are contrary to those of Nau'ts'it'i. The neglect by her people angers Nau'ts'it'i who hides the food plants to punish them.[4] Silko's retelling of this myth in Ceremony is her mythological explanation for the drought that encompasses Tayo's homeland. As she explains:

> From that time on
> they were
> so busy
> playing around with that
> Ck'o'yo magic
> they neglected the Mother Corn altar.
>
> They thought they didn't have to worry
> about anything
> They thought this magic
> could give life to plants
> and animals.
> They didn't know it was all just a trick. (C pp. 49-50)

This neglect may manifest itself in many ways, and in Tayo's time it is present in the people's disregard for their own land. The exploitation of the Cebolleta land grant for uranium is caused by the greed of the Indian people for money as well as that of those after the uranium. The Pueblos' reasoning that the land was good for nothing else--it was overgrazed and eroded--does not justify the destruction that follows. In selling the land, they destroy their own heritage. The death of the land is what the witchery wants: "things which don't shift and grow are dead things. They are things the witchery people want. Witchery works to scare people, to make them fear growth." (C p. 133)

The power of a Pueblo witch is best described as "very simple personal magic." The witches themselves are "simply ordinary humans who possess a special degree of supernatural power and direct it toward antisocial ends."[5] A witch most often appears as an owl, a crow, or a coyote, but is capable of taking the outward appearance of any animal or bird,[6] and may also appear in human form. In Ceremony Silko informs her reader, "Living animals are terrified of witches. They smell the death. That's why witches can't get close to them. That's why people keep dogs around their hogans. Dogs howl with fear when witch animals come around." (C pp. 137-38)

The concept that witches may take on human form is the basis for "Tony's Story," the story of a white policeman's harassment of innocent victims. Here Silko illustrates how the witchery may simply

be the misused power of an ordinary individual. Many of the circumstances associated with witchcraft are used by Silko. It is a dry summer "when the sky was wide and hot and the summer rains did not come; the sheep were thin, and the tumbleweeds turned brown and died."[7] Leon is home from the army, bringing with him ideas of equality with whites and talking of his "rights." His friend Tony is happy, because he "knew that Leon was once more a part of the pueblo." It is obvious, however, that Tony (Leon) does not belong. He has forgotten the rituals of the important traditional Corn Dance, and refuses to wear the arrowhead fetish Tony gives him. He is just another "troublemaker" who "came back from the army." (ST p. 125)

Tony's fear that the cop is a witch becomes reality for him when he enters Grants. He believes the cop can sense his presence: "if he really was what I feared, then he would not need to see me--he already knew we were there." (ST p. 125) The eyes that Tony cannot see are like those of the masked dancer his parents warn will grab him; the silver-frosted glasses reflect a heat so intense, "even the dogs had crawled away. . . ." Tony dares not speak about the evil cop because "even to speak about it risked bringing it close to all of us. . . ." (ST p. 127) Leon doesn't understand Tony's fear; "he couldn't remember the stories that old Teofilo told," and so he believes Tony refers only to the white man when he says, "But you can't be sure that it will kill one of them." (ST p. 127)

Tony's decision to kill the cop is his effort to destroy the witchery that follows them everywhere. A. LaVonne Ruoff explains the

mythological basis for this by comparing Leon and Tony to the mythic heroes Ma'sewi and Uyuyewi. "At the moment that Tony decides to destroy the witch, he becomes a self-appointed Pueblo war captain--a role in which he later involves Leon. The war captains represent the twin heroes Ma'sewi and Uyuyewi who appear in many Keres stories. The theme of the destruction of a witch by two young men is based on such exploits of these twins as their jointly killing two giantesses or as Ma'sewi's single-handedly drowning Pa'cayani, whose tricks brought drought and famine. . . ."[8] The ritual burning of the cop insures the annihilation of the witchery. That the destruction is complete is clear as "in the west, rain clouds were gathering." (ST p. 129)

The use of both animal and human guises for witches and the evil power witches generate is shown in "Estoy-eh-mutt and the Kunideeyah," (ST pp. 140-154) Silko's retelling of "The Witches and Arrow-Youth."[9] Estoy-eh-mutt (another name for Arrow-Boy, the hunter) suspects that something is amiss with his bride Kochininako. (In Keresan myth Kochininako is another name for Yellow Woman, the girl hero of all stories.[10]) The Boas myth relates that Yellow Woman warns her husband against entering the north room. Curiosity overcomes Arrow-Youth and upon entering he finds that she is boiling a baby. He fears that Yellow-Woman is a bad witch. In the evening Yellow Woman lays an ear of purple corn next to Arrow-Youth and instructs it to keep him on his bed. At midnight she is summoned by a cat to take the food to the witches. Arrow Youth destroys the ear of corn and follows Yellow Woman to the north valley below Acoma, where she meets the

other witches. When the witches are unable to assume animal form, Arrow-Youth's presence is discovered. He is imprisoned and the witches resume their rituals, changing to wolves, mountain lions, cats and snakes. Arrow-Youth is left on a cliff to die, but after four days is rescued by squirrel mother who plants pinon nuts to grow into trees so he can climb down. Spider Woman gives Arrow-Youth medicine to put on Yellow Woman's eyes so she will sleep. He uses the medicine, she sleeps, and he ties her to the ceiling so she dies.

In Silko's story the sister of Estoy-eh-mutt tells him that while she was up in the night with the baby she saw someone leave his house. He feels something is not right and confides in Kochininako who merely laughs at him. He goes to see Spider Woman, "who always helped the people / whenever they faced great difficulties," (ST p. 141) who gives him a special powder to swallow so he can stay awake. In the night Kochininako places a ear of dark purple corn next to Estoy-eh-mutt and instructs it to keep him asleep. She leaves with a bundle of food and Estoy-eh-mutt, kept awake by the powder, follows her. He discovers that she is a member of the "Kunideeyah, the Destroyers." (ST p. 145) The remainder of the tale directly parallels that told in Boas, with the exception of Kocininako's demise. Spider Woman gives Estoy-eh-mutt a "small woven-coil ring" which turns into a rattlesnake that kills Kochininako when he throws it at her. In this way the witchery turns against itself and causes its own destruction.

Both stories stress the goodness of natural animals, and the strength and wisdom of Grandmother Spider as caretaker of the people.

While the Boas version emphasizes the temptations Arrow-Youth must overcome to destroy the witchery, Silko's tale stresses the evils committed. The animal witches cause madness, death, and loss of game so the people will go hungry. Silko's witches feast on their slain victims and thus feed their own wickedness. Estoy-eh-mutt "feels" the witchery and experiences a fear--especially in the morning after the most active time of the witches is immediately past. That witchery is most active at night is explained by Tyler, who says that witches keep the same hours as the owls they so often impersonate.[11] Visual evidence of the witchery is seen in the drought Estoy-eh-mutt's land experiences; the spring is dry, the corn plants sickly, and worms have devoured the bean plants. Even Estoy-eh-mutt himself appears sick; he is exhausted and becomes dizzy and weak when he tries to work. For Estoy-eh-mutt the only solution is to kill Kochininako and in so doing destroy the witchery.

The culmination of all the evil forces of witchery--the disappearance of the creator, famine, insanity, and war--reveal themselves in Ceremony. Silko explains, "I've tried to go beyond any specific kind of Laguna witchery or Navajo witchery, and to begin to see witchery as a metaphor for the destroyers, or the counterforce, that force which counters vitality and birth. The counterforce is destruction and death. . . . Another name for the counterforce is 'the manipulators,' those who create nothing, merely take what is around."[12] Although the witchery transcends specific cultures and continents to unleash its destructive force on the delicate balance of

creation and destruction, its existence is necessary to maintain this sense of balance. It is when the force of witchery becomes overpowering and the balance is destroyed, that life itself is destroyed.

In Ceremony Tayo believes that he is the catalyst who has unleashed the evil force of the witchery on his people. He sees his own disregard for their traditions and beliefs as the cause of the drought. He remembers how Uncle Josiah told him that "long time ago, way back in the time immemorial, the mother of the people got angry at them for the way they were behaving. For all she cared, they could go to hell--starve to death. The animals disappeared, and no rain came for a long time. It was the green-bottle fly who went to her, asking forgiveness for the people. Since that time the people have been grateful for what the fly did for us." (C p. 106) As long as the people show their gratitude and respect, the forces are held in check. But Tayo forgets: "in the jungle he had not been able to endure the flies that had crawled over Rocky; they had enraged him. He had cursed their sticky feet and wet mouths, and when he could reach them he had smashed them between his hands." (C p. 107) He hates the rain and green foliage of the jungle; he blames nature and not the Japanese for Rocky's death. "So he had prayed the rain away, and for the sixth year it was dry; the grass turned yellow and it did not grow." (C p. 13) His words were a chant, an incantation of the evil forces to bring the pale blue summer sky. He became a tool of this evil force: "The words gathered inside him and give him strength." (C p. 12) Tayo becomes himself one of the manipulators.

Rocky (who is like a half-brother) and Tayo are a modern embodiment of Ma'see wi and Uyu'ye wi, the twin gods who turn away from the rules of mother Nau'ts'ity'i and in so doing bring many hardships to their people. Rocky forsakes his Indian heritage to embrace the White world: "Rocky understood what he had to do to win in the white outside world. After their first year at boarding school. . . Rocky deliberately avoided the old-time ways." (C p. 53) His separation of himself from the Indian culture is complete with his enlistment in the army. His death in the white man's war is symbolic of the death non-whites experience in the white culture and his own inability to return to his own. Tayo exhibits the resilience of a believer. He is eventually able to overcome the witchery that induces him to forsake his promise to Josiah, to join a war that is not his, and to condemn the beliefs of his people in mourning Rocky's death. His Indian heritage gives him the strength needed to return from his own "death" and, like the war twins and the youth Ti'yo of the Hopi Snake myth, to make the journey to gain forgiveness for himself and his people.

The White witchery is very strong in Ceremony although Silko has denied that the book is directed at any particular culture. Her story of the creation of Whites, that they are the result of a contest during a witch gathering, appears to have no mythological basis, but rather is of her own imagination. Like Ts'its'tsi'nako, the creator-witch tells a story of "white skin people," and as she speaks the story is set in motion.

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

They fear
They fear the world.
They destroy what they fear.
They fear themselves. (C p. 142)

Even the other witches are frightened of what it had created:

So the other witches said
'Okay you win; you take the prize,
but what you said just now--
it isn't so funny
It doesn't sound so good.
We are doing okay without it
we can get along without that kind of thing.
Take it back.
Call that story back.' (C p. 145)

But it can't be called back; the whites have been created, the story "set in motion / to work for us." (C p. 144) As Betonie explains to Tayo, "'White people are only tools that the witchery manipulates.'" (C p. 139)

For Tayo the White witchery begins with his conception; it is part of him, as Auntie at every opportunity reminds him. "Since he could remember, he had known Auntie's shame for what his mother had done, and Auntie's shame for him." (C p. 59) His light brown skin and hazel eyes serve him and others as constant reminders of the mother who left him and disappeared, much as mother Nau'ts'ity'i left her people; Tayo is the unwanted twin left in the care of another. Tayo's

shame is not his alone; "what happened to the girl (his mother) did not happen to her alone, it happened to all of them." (C p.71) Tayo's mother could not return to her people because she had been taught to be ashamed of herself: "Shamed by what they taught her in school about the deplorable ways of the Indian people; holy white missionary people who wanted only good for the Indians, white people who dedicated their lives to helping the Indians, these people urged her to break away from her home." (C p. 71) The shame she feels for her people reverses and becomes that which they feel for her. Tayo feels the pain that results, "because without him there would have not been so much shame and disgrace for the family." (C p. 72) His broken promise to bring Rocky safely home becomes for him and for Auntie yet another sign of the White weakness in him.

Ironically, just as Auntie had desperately tried to pull her sister back from the White culture, she encourages Rocky to become a part thereof. In Tayo the whiteness is for Auntie weakness and sin; for Rocky it is a way to strength and success. "She valued Rocky's growing understanding of the outside world, of the books, of everything of importance and power. He was becoming what she had always wanted: someone who could not only make sense of the outside world but become part of it." (C p. 79) Rocky's death ends not only his life, but also Auntie's opportunity to overcome the shame Tayo has brought to her. Auntie is a victim of the disordered thinking that emphasizes materialistic values, thinking brought about by the evil force of the witchery. "The witchery put this disordered thinking

into motion long ago and distorted human beings' perceptions so that they believed that other creatures--insects and beasts and half-breeds and whites and Indians and Japanese--were enemies rather than part of the one being we all share, and thus should be destroyed."[13]

The ultimate force of destruction is the war and the hatred it generates. Emo, Leroy, Pinky, and Harley are victims of this force and become themselves destroyers. Tricked into thinking they could be part of the outside world, they fought for the country that was once theirs. "They had been treated first class once, with their uniforms. As long as there had been a war and the white people were afraid of the Japs and Hitler. But these Indians got fooled when they thought it would last." (C p. 174) Veterans caught in witchery's thick gauzy web, they become incapable of feelings and impervious to life. "'Only destruction is capable of arousing a sensation, the remains of something alive in them; and each time they do it, the scar thickens, and they feel less and less, yet still hungering for more.'" (C p. 240) They turn to liquor to escape the pain of remembering. "Liquor was medicine for the anger that made them hurt, for the pain of the loss, medicine for tight bellies and choked-up throats." (C p. 41)

Emo is the epitome of the model soldier. His scorn for his own culture--"'Here's the Indians' mother earth! Old dried-up thing!'" (C p. 25)--finds release in the accouterments of war. "Emo had liked what they showed him: big mortar shells that blew tanks and big trucks to pieces; jagged steel flakes that exploded from the

grenades; the way the flame thrower melted a rifle into a shapeless lump." (C p. 64) He wasn't afraid of war or killing; " . . . Emo grew from each killing. Emo fed off each man he killed, and the higher the rank of the dead man, the higher it made Emo." (C p. 63) His war souvenirs kept in a Bull Durham sack, teeth from a dead Japanese colonel, are the things most dear to him, medicine to give him strength and courage. His feeling of hatred for the whites consumes him and includes Tayo; "Emo had hated him since the time they had been in grade school together, and the only reason for this hate was that Tayo was part white." (C p. 59) Emo's immersion in the witchery, illustrated by the burlesque parody of Pueblo myth attributed to him, (C pp. 59-61) is complete and irreversible.

Pinky, Leroy, and Harley, though less affected than Emo, become death victims of the witchery. War changes Harley little, except to develop his taste for beer, and he asserts there is not a "damn thing wrong" with him. Tayo recognizes a subtle change, "there was something in Harley's laugh he had never heard before. Somehow Harley didn't seem to feel anything at all, and he masked it with smart talk and laughter." (C p. 23)

Tayo regards Leroy and Harley as his allies: "They had been his friends for a long time; they were the only ones left now." (C p. 165) He needs them; "without his friends he didn't have a chance of completing the ceremony," (C p. 252) so he resists the terrible feeling that grows inside to warn him "that they were not his friends but had turned against him." (C p. 254) He recognizes that the only

way to exorcise the witchery is "to keep the story out of the reach of the destroyers . . . and their witchery could turn, upon itself, upon them." (C p. 259) Like Arrowboy watching the Kunideeyahs Tayo witnesses Emo's merciless killing of Harley, a death Tayo realizes was intended for him. "He knew what they were doing; Harley had failed them, and all that had been intended for Tayo had now turned on Harley. There was no way the destroyers could lose: either way they had a victim and a corpse." (C p. 263)

Tayo's resistance of the witchery's force indicates that his cure is near completion. "It had been a close call. The witchery had almost ended the story according to its plan; Tayo had almost jammed the screwdriver into Emo's skull the way the witchery had wanted. . . ." (C p. 265) But killing Emo would have perpetuated the very force Tayo sought to overcome. Instead, just as Old Betonie predicted, the pattern of the ceremony was in the stars, completing the sand painting that was begun with the scalp ceremony; Tayo had come full circle to a new beginning:

> He cried the relief he felt at finally seeing the pattern, the way all the stories fit together--the old stories, the war stories, their stories--to become the story that was still being told. He was not crazy; he had never been crazy. He had only seen and heard the world as it always was: no boundaries, only transitions through all distances and time. (C p. 258)

The cleansing ritual, the vomiting attempts to rid himself of everything-- "all the past, all his life," (C p. 177) is over; Tayo has overcome the witchery; he is ready to tell his story, to "remember everything: as Ts'eh has told him to do.

Whirling darkness
has come back on itself.
It keeps all its witchery
to itself.

It doesn't open its eyes
with its witchery.

It has stiffened
with the effects of its own witchery.

It is dead for now.
It is dead for now.
It is dead for now.
It is dead for now. (C p. 274)

NOTES

[1]Leslie Marmon Silko, This Song Remembers, Jane B. Katz, ed., (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1980), p. 193.

[2]Leslie Marmon Silko, Ceremony (New York: New American Library, Inc., 1977), p. 70. (Hereafter indicated in text by C.)

[3]Alan R. Velie, ed., American Indian Literature (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979), pp. 26-27.

[4]Franz Boas, Keresan Texts (New York: The American Ethnological Society, 1928), pp. 13-16, 236-37.

[5]Hamilton A. Tyler, Pueblo Gods and Myths (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964), p. 259.

[6]Hamilton A. Tyler, Pueblo Birds and Myths (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979), p. 194.

[7]Leslie Marmon Silko, Storyteller (New York: Seaver Books, 1981), p. 123. (Hereafter indicated in text by ST.)

[8]A. LaVonne Ruoff, "Ritual and Renewal: Keres Traditions in the Short Fiction of Leslie Silko," Melus, 5, No. 4 (1978), p. 7.

[9]Boas, pp. 130-40, 263-65.

[10]Boas, p. 218.

[11]Tyler, Pueblo Birds and Myths, p. 195.

[12]Silko, This Song Remembers, p. 193.

[13]Paula Gunn Allen, ed., Studies in American Indian Literature (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1983), p. 132.

III. THE YELLOW WOMAN STORIES

Of all the stories told by Leslie Silko, her Yellow Woman stories are those most obviously founded in Keresan myth. Her short stories involving Buffalo Man, Whirlwind Man, and Estrucuyu the giant are strikingly similar to those related in Franz Boas' Keresan Texts, and much of her poetry (as well as her novel) includes mythic Yellow Woman overtones. "Generically the girl heroes of all stories are called Yellow-Woman; when sisters are mentioned Blue-Woman, Red-Woman and White-Woman may also occur."[1] Yellow-Woman (Kochininako) is regarded as a huntress, and may be either the sister or wife of Arrow Youth, daughter of the tribal chief. Acoma-Laguna myths place her on or near Mt. Taylor, hence she is associated with the North. She is often mother of the war twins and is referred to in at least one Keresan story as "the mother of all of us."[2] She is the embodiment of Indian woman as child, friend, lover, wife, and mother.

In Storyteller Silko relates the story of Kochininako, the huntress, and Estrucuyu, the giant, combining elements from the two versions of "Yellow-Woman and the Giantess" as related in Boas.[3] Kochininako, a young Laguna huntress, is returning home from south of Laguna to her mother and sisters when she meets a big animal, Estrucuyu the giant. He eats all the rabbits she has killed, as well as her bow and arrows, and flint knife. She enters a cave to remove her leggings, moccasins, belt, and dress, and throws them out to the giant to eat. Estrucuyu then tries to grab her, but his head will not fit into the cave. She calls to the Twin Hero Brothers, Ma'see'wi and

Ou'yu'ye'wi "who were always out / helping people who were in danger,"[4] who come and cut off the giant's head, split open his stomach and pull out his heart which lands "near the river / between Laguna and Paguate" (ST p. 87) and turns into a rock, Yash'ka ("heart").

In the first Boas myth, Yellow-Woman, wife of Arrow-Youth, goes south to hunt rabbits. At the spring near a cave she sees Old-Woman-Giantess who eats her rabbits. Yellow-Woman flees into the cave which is too small for the giantess to enter. Arrow Youth hears Yellow Woman crying and comes to rescue her; he kills the giantess, shooting arrows into her chest and heart, and cuts off her head. The second version is similar; however, Yellow Woman is rescued by Ma'see'wi and his brother who gamble with the giantess, kill her, and cut her open. They remove Yellow Woman's shoes and dress, and kill ten rabbits for her to eat when she gets home.

The obvious similarities of the stories give credence to the theory that Silko was familiar with the myths, whether from actually reading the Boas versions, or through the oral tradition of her people. While in the Boas myths Yellow Woman is married, Silko's Kochininako is a young girl, and the giantess becomes a giant. These differences are most probably due to the fact that the story Silko heard was an adaptation for a young girl who "felt very sad about not getting to go hunting" with her parents. She explains, "Maybe that's why Aunt Alice told us this story." (ST p. 82) It may also explain

the fable-like quality of her own story, which seems designed to explain the origin of a Laguna landmark.

The river is a prominent feature in the Yellow Woman stories, along with the cottonwood or willow trees. In several myths Yellow Woman meets her lover-abductor under a tree by the river. Here she leaves her water jar turned upside-down, at times the only sign to her people that she is gone. Silko, who grew up near the river, comments, "I guess from the beginning there was the idea that the river was kind of a special place where all sorts of things go on. . . . The river was a place to meet boyfriends and lovers. I used to wander around down there and try to imagine walking around the bend and just happening to stumble upon some beautiful man. . . . I finally put the two together: the adolescent longings and the old stories, plus the stories around Laguna at the time about people who did, in fact, use the river as a meeting place."[5]

Whirlwind Man meets Yellow Woman by the river and tells her, "I myself belong to the wind and thus it is, that we walk with dust and with wind storms. We run very fast."[6] Silko uses this excerpt from Keresan myth as a prologue to her story "Yellow Woman," a modern adaptation merging ideas from several myths including the Yellow Woman abduction myths of Whirlwind Man, Flint-Wing, and Ts'its'inits, the Whipper. But as A. LaVonne Ruoff explains, "Although Silko's 'Yellow Woman' is based on traditional abduction tales, it is more than a modernized version. Silko is less concerned with the events involved in Yellow Woman's abduction and her subsequent return home than with

the character's confusion about what is real and what is not. Underlying this is the character's identification with Keres legends and her temporary rejection of the confining monotony of life within the pueblo."[7]

The "morning after" opening of "Yellow Woman" establishes an ethereal, dreamlike setting, reinforced throughout the narrative by Yellow Woman's memories of the myths she has heard. She recalls "the old stories about the ka'tsina spirit and Yellow-Woman," (ST p. 55) which may refer to the myth of Tsaiyai'tyii sts'icye who "stole Yellow-Woman at that time on the plaza in the north above."[8] She leaves Silva (her abductor) in the morning and follows "the river south the way we had come the afternoon before," (ST p. 54) only to return before he awakes, an indication of her own desire to sustain the dream and remain suspended in the moment of time away from the boredom and mundane responsibilities of her daily existence. She asserts that she has a name and is not Yellow Woman, "But I only said that you were him and that I was Yellow Woman--I'm not really her--I have my own name. . . .'" (ST p. 55) Purposefully, her identity is never revealed; she is anybody or nobody, real or unreal. Through anonymity she is universal.

Silko skillfully weaves the threads of several Keresan myths into her story, using them to connect and perhaps confuse past with present. Yellow Woman remembers the story of Badger and Coyote[9] in which Coyote tricks Badger so he can be alone with Yellow Woman. The two stories merge with the line, "'Come here,' he said gently," which

may be either Coyote or Silva speaking. Past becomes present as she becomes Yellow Woman in her own thoughts. She recalls that "Yellow Woman went away with the spirit from the north and lived with him and his relations. She was gone for a long time, but then one day she came back and she brought twin boys." (ST p. 56) This is the story of Ts'its'inits',[10] the kachina who wooed Yellow Woman and took her to his home. Twin sons were born, but when Yellow Woman tried to return with them to her father, Chief-Remembering-Prayer-Sticks, her sister cried and the three were taken back forever by Ts'its'inits'.[11]

Immersed in her reverie, Silko's Yellow Woman realizes she is like the mythic woman "with no thought beyond the moment she meets the ka'tsina spirit and they go." (ST p. 56) Her actions to reject Silva are an effort to repudiate the story which she believes could be "real only then, back in time immemorial." (ST p. 56) But Silva reiterates her thoughts of those legends she has heard: "'someday they will talk about us, and they will say, "those two lived long ago when things like that happened."'" (ST p. 57) Times merge for Yellow Woman and even when Silva is gone, she knows, "because I believe it, he will come back sometime and be waiting by the river." (ST p. 62) Kenneth Roemer explains, "The time sense of the finite present momentarily merging with dimensionless realms is an important element of modern fiction writers' thematic treatment of the ways in which ancient beliefs impinge on and transform the present."[12] In realizing that the present will become the past, Silko's Yellow Woman can believe that which she wants to: she is Yellow Woman.

Silko explores the origin of the first Yellow Woman in "COTTONWOOD Part One: Story of Sun House," the first of a two part poem. The setting is "time immemorial" as Silko explains,

> (All this was happening long time ago, see?)
> Before that time, there were no stories
> about drastic things which
> must be done
> for the world
> to continue (ST pp. 64-65)

The poem contains the elements of the Yellow Woman stories: Kochininako leaves her home, husband, and children to meet her lover at a prearranged time at the appointed place, a cottonwood tree by the river, "she did not know how to find him / except by the cottonwood tree." (ST p. 65) However, the implication is that she goes not by choice, but because "it was the season / to go again / to find the place." (ST p. 64)

Her lover is Sun Man, a god in human form: "But you see, he was the Sun, / he was only pretending to be / a human being." (ST p. 63) She meets him at Sun House, "which is located at the southernmost point of the Sun's rising during the year."[13] It is unclear whether Kochininako and her lover meet during the time of the Winter Solstice "before the winter constellations / closed around the sky forever" (ST p. 66) and when the Pueblos pay homage to the Sun, god of the seasons bringing crops which sustain life, or at the time of the Autumnal Equinox, "When day balanced once more with night." (ST p. 63) This is probably less important, however, than the fact that this is the start of a cycle, "She had been with him / only once," (ST p. 65) a ritual Sun Man tells Kochininako must be completed although "the people may

not understand." (ST p. 64) She is a sacrifice given "Out of love for this earth" (ST p. 65); their tryst at Sun House perpetuates both life and myth, "And so the earth continued / as it has since that time." (ST p. 66)

The reference in the poem to the myth of Paiyatemu should not be overlooked. Paiyatemu, who is "the fertilizing and sexual power of the Sun molded into anthropomorphic shape," was "born of a mortal woman who conceived him when a beam of sunlight fell upon her as she slept."[14] In Silko's poem Kochininako remembers only her lover's eyes, "His eyes (the light in them had blinded her) / so she had never seen him / only his eyes. . . ." (ST p. 65) The mythological reference also explains several lines of the poem referring to the colors, "'cottonwood leaves / more colors of the sun / than the sun himself,'" (ST p. 63) for Paiyatemu is often surrounded by myriads of butterflies, "bright-colored fragments of summer."[15] The male hero of Silko's poem may actually be Paiyatemu or another demigod, for in Pueblo belief, as explained by Hamilton Tyler, "The Sun Father has children by mortal women, and some of his offspring can travel a rainbow from this world to the house of the Sun and back again at will."[16]

Paiyatemu also appears in "When Sun Came to River Woman,"[17] as the man of Sun who in Keresan myth abducts Yellow Woman and her sisters because they refuse to marry. He leads them to a spring and tells them to listen for the sound of a pigeon (the native text gives the Mourning Dove's name[18]) which will indicate that there is water.[19]

While the cry of the Mourning Dove, a frequently seen bird in Pueblo areas, is usually thought of as a rain song,[20] in Silko's poem the lament is the stimulus for "remembering the lost one / remembering the love." The persona, left alone with only memories, sees herself as river woman, left by man of Sun (Paiyatemu) to "sing for rainclouds," those who have been transformed through death. Her story, like Yellow Woman's, is "timeless / the year unknown / unnamed." (LW p. 12) Silko describes the memory of Yellow Woman in "Love Poem":

> This woman loved a man
> and she breathed to him
> her damp earth song.
> I am haunted by this story
> I remember it in cottonwood leaves
> their fragrance in the shade.
> I remember it in the wide blue sky
> when the rain smell comes with the wind. (LW p. 16)

In Ceremony Silko combines the positive attributes of the Yellow Women in legend along with those of Ts'its'tsi'nako (Thought Woman) and Tsi'ty'icots'a (Salt Woman, in some legends sister to Ts'its'tsi'nako) to create Ts'eh, the mountain spirit instrumental in effecting Tayo's cure; the Night Swan, who is linked to Tayo and Ts'eh through Josiah and the cattle; and Betonie's grandmother, who appears to be Ts'eh's ancestor. Tayo first encounters Ts'eh in late September at the time of the Autumnal Equinox, when Old Betonie's star pattern converges in the sky. Ancient beliefs shape modern myth as Silko's story of Tayo and Ts'eh parallels that of Winter and Summer in which Yellow Woman, daughter of the Acoma chief and wife of Winter, meets Summer who claims her for his. Legend tells that the people grew no

food because it was always cold. Summer met Yellow Woman and gave her corn and melons; he returned home with her and when Winter, her husband, came home, he challenged Summer to a fight. Winter lost the battle and Summer demanded that there be seven months summer and five months winter.[21] In at least one version of the myth, Shakok (Winter) and Miochin (Summer) share not only the year, but also Yellow Woman who lives with Shakok during summer and Miochin during winter.[22] It is apparent that Silko's story of Tayo and Ts'eh is a reinactment of the Miochin and Yellow Woman legend. Ts'eh disappears in the fall to winter with her husband the hunter, and reappears in May, spending the summer with Tayo.

Like Tayo, Ts'eh was light-skinned with ocher eyes, "She wasn't much older than he was, but she wore her hair long, like the old women did, pinned back in a knot.[23] Ts'eh is both young and old--she has no age. She links not only cultures, but generations. Carol Mitchell explains this time distortion as part of the ritualistic element in the novel. "The most important distortion of time occurs in the episodes with Tayo and Ts'eh for 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."[24] Her name, Ts'eh explains to Tayo, is a nickname; her Indian name is too long to remember. "Ts'eh Montano" may link her to "Tsi'ty'ico ts'a," Salt Woman, grandmother of Uyu'ye wi and Ma'see wi, the Pueblo spirit of pure water. Kenneth Lincoln points out that "Ts'eh Montano, or 'Water Mountain,' seems a coded and composite reference to the spirit-woman

who returns vitality to the arid desert for Indians, Mexicans, and whites alike, all embodied in Tayo, all sharing in the sickness and health of one another, many as one with the land."[25]

It is with the help of Ts'eh that Tayo is able to regain his desire to live and become again in balance with his world. Through her guidance, Tayo relearns the importance of nature in maintaining the balance in life. Like Grandmother Spider whose web protects her people, Ts'eh uses her shawl to gather the roots and plants; she redistributes the plantlife to places most in need, and enlisting Tayo's help as caretaker, provides assurance that the delicate balance will be maintained. She strengthens Tayo's resistance to the forces of evil that are "always moving, always shifting," (C p. 237) by restoring his belief in the old traditions and rituals, and prepares him for the conflict that is to come. She warns him of the destroyers and their desire to change the ending of the story through his death: ". . . like old Betonie, she could see reflections in sandrock pools of rainwater, images shifting in the flames of juniper fire; she heard voices, low and distant in the night." (C p. 243) She cautions Tayo to "remember everything," for "'as long as you remember what you have seen, then nothing is gone. As long as you remember, it is part of this story we have together.'" (C p. 242)

Silko links Ts'eh to Betonie's grandmother and the Night Swan through their sharing of common characteristics. These three women born of Indian legend are all of mixed ancestry, exhibiting the fair skin and light eyes of mixed-breeds. All seem to share the

supernatural powers and perceptions possessed by Betonie who, much like Ts'imotc inyi Man in Keresan legend who went to live on the mountain Tse-pi'na as a shaman and from there cared for his people,[26] lives the ceremonies of his tribe. Betonie tells Tayo the story of his grandmother who as a runaway child was found by the Mexicans when her blue lace shawl dropped from her hiding place in a tree. The shawl not only connects her to Ts'eh, but also to the Night Swan who dresses in a blue satin kimono and slippers, lives in a room with a blue door and blue flowered walls, has a blue armchair, a blue sheet on her bed, and whose ceremonial dance of destruction emphasizes the power of ceremonies. The relationship of the three women centers on Betonie who some critics suggest may actually be Ts'eh's grandfather, and as Silko suggests in Ceremony by the Night Swan's desire to stop near the mountain, may also have a close connection (perhaps familial) with her.

Betonie's grandmother is left by the Mexicans with Descheeny whose three jealous sister-wives link her to the Yellow Woman legends. Like Betonie who will follow her, she deals with magic, gathering the seeds, leaves, animal claws and teeth, and other essentials for countering the evil forces that work for the end of the world. (C p. 157) She recognizes the need for new ways to counter the witchery, and indeed this is why she has come to Descheeny, "for his ceremonies, for the chants and the stories they grew from." (C p. 158) Her relationship with him is design, not accident. Though her own child is raised by Descheeny's daughters, Betonie's grandmother rescues him

from the old trash pile in the arroyo where as a boy he is left to die, and brings him up, teaching him all she knows. Betonie's grandmother anticipates the progress of the story and the advent of those such as Tayo who are necessary to carry on the ceremony. "We have to depend on people not even born yet. A hundred years from now." (C p. 157)

Similarly, the Night Swan recognizes the progress of the story and tells Tayo, "'You don't have to understand what is happening. But remember this day. You will recognize it later. You are part of it now.'" (C p. 105)

While in Ceremony the Night Swan, Betonie's Grandmother, and Ts'eh are three individual characters appearing separately within the plot, their function is the same: to promote the completion of the ceremony. All three are an extension of Ts'its'tsi'nako (Thought Woman) and it is a distinct possibility that Silko intends each to be a personification thereof. While Betonie's Grandmother is only twelve or thirteen when she is found, she possesses knowledge far beyond her numerical years. The Night Swan appears to Tayo to be ageless: "She did not look old or young to him then; she was like the rain and the wind; age had no relation to her." (C p. 103) Ts'eh appears to be Tayo's age, but pins her hair like the old women. All three exude an air of caring for others. Of the Night Swan Tayo "felt that she cared a great deal about him." (C p. 105) He later recognizes this love in Ts'eh: "They had always been loved. He thought of her then; she had always loved him, she had never left him; she had always been there."

(C p. 267) Like Ts'its'tsi'nako (or Nau'ts'ity'i), even though she is physically absent, she is still there caring for her people.

But Tayo recognizes Ts'eh as more than just a person. Like the old men of the tribe who see her return as a sign of blessings to come, Tayo understands the greater significance. "He could feel where she had come from, and he understood where she would always be." (C p. 241) The three women are Ts'its'tsi'nako: as she was and as she is. The story goes on; it is the same then as now. Old Grandma says it best: "'It seems like I already heard these stories before . . . only thing is, the names sound different.'" (C p. 273)

This timeless, everlasting existence of Ts'its'tsi'nako (Yellow Woman) is expressed in two early poems by Silko, "Where Mountain Lion Laid Down With Deer," (LW p. 18) and "Indian Song: Survival." (LW pp. 25-27) In the first Silko's narrator speaks of returning to the very beginning, "where mountainlion laid down with deer," meaning figuratively when all of nature and creation were one. While identifying the narrator as a specific being can only be conjecture, the poem itself seems to indicate that the narrator is Ts'its'tsi'nako. She speaks of descending "a thousand years ago" from the grey stone cliff, just as Ts'its'tsi'nako is believed to have appeared from the north. The "pale blue leaves" and "wild mountain smell" link her with the ancestors for whom she smells the wind, ancestors who as spiritual beings would dwell on the mountain Tse-pi'na and appear in the thunderclouds. She realizes that it is better for her to "stay up here" now, to remain on the mountain, because "the old songs are all forgotten" as well as "the story of my

birth." Those who live now don't remember or know of how she was taken away from the people. The most obvious reference to legend is the last section of the poem which speaks of "How I swam away in freezing mountain water," and refers to the abduction of Yellow Woman by Paiyatemu. According to legend Ts'its'tsi'nako was also taken away from her people as a punishment for forsaking the old ways. Like the narrator, she is only a memory "spilling out into the world." But like the "freezing mountain water" that comes "tumbling down out of the mountain," she too, through legends and memory, serves as a life-giving force to her people.

"Indian Song: Survival" is divided into ten numbered sections. Although the poem defies interpretation, it may be read as a soliloquy on life; the odd-numbered stanzas are a reflection on the past, the even a contemplation of the narrator's personal significance. The journey north "to escape winter" is life, with the river symbolic of water, the life-giving force of the universe. The mountain lion, companion on this journey, is the original of the beasts of prey, Chief of the Hunt society, and controller of all other animals, who represents all of animal nature in the poem. Stanza six in which the narrator becomes both the eagle and spider, seems to underscore his own significance and universiality as part of life, as does stanza ten:

> taste me,
> I am the wind
> touch me,
> I am the lean grey deer
> running on the edge of the rainbow. (ST p. 37)

This universiality of nature expresses the presence of Ts'its'tsi'nako, who, as creator of all life and protector thereof, is life itself. The end of a physical life is inevitable, "It is only a matter of time, Indian / you can't sleep with the river forever," but the journey "up to Cloudy Mountain" ensures a more meaningful spiritual life.

The Yellow Women of Keresan legend do not always emerge as victors, and in Storyteller Silko included two such tales, both based on the legend of Buffalo Man.[27] The legend tells that Yellow Woman, wife of Arrow Youth who is away hunting deer, goes to the North Spring for water. Shortly after she arrives there, Buffalo Man also appears. He tells her to leave her water jar upside down and go with him. He carries her on his back westward through the mountain gap to the top where Buffalo Man lives.

Arrow Youth learns from Big Star (star of the east) that Yellow Woman has been taken by Buffalo Man and returns home from where he then journeys north to search for Yellow Woman. Old Spider Woman shortens his journey by mixing some medicine for him to put the buffalo guards to sleep. Arrow Youth finds Yellow Woman and they escape down the mountain with the help of Eagle-Man. From there they must outrun the Buffalo-Chief who has supernatural powers. Arrow-Youth and Yellow Woman climb a cottonwood tree and the buffalo pass underneath. The presence of the two is discovered by the last buffalo to pass. The buffalo then try to knock the tree down, but all are killed by Arrow Youth. Yellow Woman begins crying and tells him it is

because he has killed her husband, Buffalo Man. Therefore Arrow Youth kills her with the rest of the buffalo and returns without her.

The Boas myth seems to indicate that the meeting of Yellow Woman and Buffalo Man is not pure chance, but rather is by design. She is at the North Spring waiting and quite willingly leaves with him. In Silko's story "COTTONWOOD Part Two: Buffalo Story," Yellow Woman must search far from home for water because the drought has dried up the spring nearest the village. Buffalo Man arrives at the far spring first; when Yellow Woman comes she is afraid because she can tell some "giant animal" has just been there because "the water was churning and muddy." She refuses to go with him:

> So he grabbed her
> and he put her on his back
> and carried her away.
> They went very fast
> and she couldn't escape him. (ST p. 69)

As in the Boas myth, Big Star tells Arrow Boy that Buffalo Man has taken his wife, and he seeks the help of Spider Woman. She gives him red clay dust to throw in the eyes of the guards. While in the Boas myth Arrow Youth travels to the west, in Silko's story his search is to the east. He finds Kochininako and urges her to run as fast as she can. "She seemed to / get up a little slowly / but he didn't think much of it then." (ST p. 72) They escape alone, but are pursued by Buffalo Man. The buffalo are killed by Arrow Boy, who also kills Yellow Woman when she says she loved the buffalo and wants to stay with them. Arrow Boy and his people return to the cottonwood tree for the buffalo meat which will cure their hunger.

Silko's Yellow Woman becomes a martyr for her people by giving her own life to end their suffering.

> Nobody would be hungry then
>
> It was all because
> one time long ago
> our daughter, our sister Kochininako
> went away with them. (ST p. 76)

While she may be a victim of the supernatural power of Buffalo Man, and like Yellow Woman in the story "Estoy-eh-mutt and the Kunideeyahs" is overcome by the evil force and of necessity is destroyed by her own husband, she emerges from Silko's tale as a quasi-heroine. Although the Boas tale does not expressly state this idea, it is implied through the skepticism with which her father Chief Remembering Prayer Sticks regards Arrow Boy's declaration that "she loved her husband Buffalo Man very much." The act of the buffalo attempting to knock down the cottonwood tree (symbol of life) may be viewed as an attempt to destroy all life; their death subsequently results in sustenance of the people.

Silko also uses the Buffalo Man legend for the basis of "Storytelling," a somewhat humorous modern adaptation of the abduction myth. The poem points out the timelessness of these stories; just as these things happened long ago, so they are still happening. The same excuses are used now as then:

> '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.' (ST pp. 95-96)

The outrage of the husband who tells his belatedly returned wife:

'You better have a damn good story,'
her husband said,
'about where you been for the past
ten months and how you explain these
twin baby boys.' (ST p. 95)

The transition is made from past to present, reminding Silko's reader of the war twins of legend who were also the result of an indiscretion. But the importance of this particular poem lies not in its relation to myth, nor in the pleasure it provides, but in the conclusion drawn.

My husband
left
after he heard the story
and moved back in with his mother.
It was my fault and
I don't blame him either.
I could have told
the story
better than I did. (ST p. 98)

Silko tells her stories to entertain as well as teach, as is apparent in two early poems, "Mesita Men," and "Si'ahh aash." Both lightheartedly jest at sexual promiscuity, a subject Silko also addresses in Storyteller's "Out of the Works No Good Comes From." In Ceremony Josiah's first encounter with the Night Swan is followed by "an uncomfortable feeling that he had forgotten or lost something . . . even while he dreamed he was still aware of this feeling, that something had been left behind." (C p.87) After supper Josiah

returns to his truck to make sure his work gloves are on the seat; he counts his change to make sure it is the right amount; only the next day when he finds himself looking to catch a glimpse of the Night Swan does he realize what he had left behind. Silko uses the same incident in her poem; the first section, "Possession," is directed at the man who has lost something: "the feeling now / is overwhelming / of something no longer with you." (ST p. 103) Like Josiah, that something is part of himself, the part that is possessed by another being. "Something has been lost." (ST p. 104)

The second part, "Incantation," tells of two individuals caught in the rituals that have in the past created a spell of familiar and comfortable feelings. But for one, the magic is no longer there. Like a mathematical equation in which elements are added and subtracted, the balance of life changes; feelings, like colors, change and fade.

> After all bright colors of sunset and
> leaves are added together
> lovers are subtracted
> children multiplied, are divided, taken away.
> (ST p. 105)

The change is imperceptible at first; only over the expanse of time is it recognized. Thus the persona says, "I did not plan to tell you. / Better to lose colors gradually. . . ." (ST p. 105) Like the TV set that "Lost its color / and only hums gray outlines," the feelings dissipate "putting distance and time between us." (ST p. 106)

The resolution of the poem, "A Note," expresses the idea that one has to live one's own life; we learn only from our own mistakes, not from those of others.

They tell you
they try to warn you
about some particular cliff
sandrock a peculiar cloudy dawn color.

It is the place,
they say
where so many others have fallen. (ST p. 107)

Like Yellow Woman who appeared one time long ago from the direction of the cliffs, so each who believes waits again for her return. Although figuratively Silko speaks here of ancient belief, she is also speaking of the trust and belief one must have in the old ways. The stories today are the same as they always have been; the names and times may change; the people remain the same.

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

NOTES

[1]Franz Boas, Keresan Texts (New York: The American Ethnological Society, 1928), p. 218.

[2]Boas, p. 62.

[3]Boas, pp. 127-30.

[4]Leslie Marmon Silko, Storyteller (New York: Seaver Books, 1981), p. 86. (Hereafter indicated in text by ST.)

[5]Leslie Marmon Silko, This Song Remembers, Jane B. Katz, ed., (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1980), p. 189-90.

[6]Boas, p. 119.

[7]A. LaVonne Ruoff, "Ritual and Renewal: Keres Traditions in the Short Fiction of Leslie Silko," Melus, 5, No. 4 (1978), p. 12.

[8]Boas, p. 102.

[9]Boas, pp. 102-04, 167-69, 271-72.

[10]Boas, pp. 259-60.

[11]"When a lost or dead person is being revived nobody is allowed to cry, else he will be lost forever." Boas, p. 220.

[12]Kenneth Roemer, "Bear and Elk: The Nature(s) of Contemporary American Indian Poetry," in Studies in American Indian Literature, Paula Gunn Allen, ed., (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1983), pp. 184-85.

[13]Hamilton A. Tyler, Pueblo Gods and Myths, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964), p. 153.

[14]Tyler, Pueblo Gods and Myths, p. 143.

[15]Hamilton A. Tyler, Pueblo Birds and Myths (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979), p. 34.

[16]Tyler, Pueblo Gods and Myths, p. 142.

[17]Leslie Marmon Silko, Laguna Woman (Greenfield, New York: Greenfield Review Press, 1974), p. 12. (Hereafter indicated in text by LW.)

[18]Tyler, Pueblo Birds and Myths, p. 127.

[19]Boas, pp. 91-102.

[20]Tyler, Pueblo Birds and Myths, p. 124.

[21]Boas, pp. 33-35, 245.

[22]George H. Pradt, "Shakok and Miochin: Origin of Summer and Winter," Journal of American Folklore, No. 15 (1902), pp. 88-90.

[23]Leslie Marmon Silko, Ceremony (New York: New American Library, Inc., 1977), p. 185. (Hereafter indicated in text by C.)

[24]Carol Mitchell, "Ceremony as Ritual," American Indian Quarterly, 5, No. 1 (1979), p. 32-33.

[25]Kenneth Lincoln, Native American Renaissance (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), p. 246.

[26]Boas, pp. 38-39.

[27]Boas, pp. 122-27, 261-62.

IV. COYOTE - TRICKSTER

Integral to North American Indian folk literature is the clown, or "trickster" figure. While his origin and status in mythology remain debatable, according to Paul Radin Trickster is "admittedly the the oldest of all figures in American Indian mythology, probably in all mythologies."[1] While various forms are attributed to the trickster--to the Oglala he is the spider, to Tsimshian tribes the raven, and to the Winnebago he is the hare[2]--in Laguna Pueblo stories the trickster figure most often appears in the form of the coyote. Names attributed to this coyote-trickster include Trickster, Imitator, First Born, Old Man, Old Man Coyote, Chief Coyote, First Creator, Transformer, and Changing Person. Trickster is both courageous and cowardly, embodiment of both villain and hero. Hamilton Tyler in Pueblo Gods and Myths explains:

> Trickster's name explains a part of his nature: he is always attempting tricks, but while he is cunning he is also silly, so that as often as not his tricks rebound upon himself and he becomes a victim, a buffoon--our clown. He has extremely gross appetites for both food and sex, and often these are not simply a surfeit of normal diet, but also include the abnormal.[3]

While the Trickster as clown is a comic figure, his role is much more than just entertainment. He is used in Pueblo stories (as well as in those of other tribes) to reveal the very nature of human behavior in its norms as well as in its extremes. Hamilton Tyler further explains coyote's foolish nature:

> In Pueblo opinion Coyote is not only a second-rate hunter, although he may be useful in tiring out rabbits and thus making them easier to catch, but his much vaunted cleverness is more a form of

> antisocial stupidity which often leads to his own destruction.[4]

Franz Boas in Keresan Texts explains that when the hunting customs were established Wolf and Coyote as well as Mountain Lion, Cahona, and the Wild Cat were instructed to fast for four days, Wolf and Coyote disobeyed and ate corn bread. On the fourth day the animals were allowed to kill game, but only to drink the blood; they were not to eat the meat. Coyote caught a rabbit and ate it, thus breaking the rules set forth. Because of this, it was determined that the other animals would kill game for sustenance, but Coyote would only be allowed to eat carrion.[5]

Other Keresan myths telling of Coyotoe's exploits include the story of how Coyote helped to place the stars in the sky. After the Seven Stars (the Big Dipper), the Three Stars (Pot-rest Stars), and the Morning Star had been carefully placed, Coyote carelessly uncovered the jar containing all the other stars, releasing them and thus accounting for their scattered disarray in the sky.[6] Since the very beginning of time Coyote has been causing mischief.

Coyote's relationship to other animals is somewhat ambiguous. While he is a pursuer of the rabbit and other small game, he himself may be a victim of bears, lions, and wildcats. He may be found following the buffalo, fulfilling his role of scavenger in cleaning up carrion. He is often a companion of the badger, forming a duo in which each benefits from the other. Both animals pursue small game, but while badger has little sense of smell and is a slow mover though an excellent digger, coyote can pick up even the faintest scent miles

away, is speedy, but can dig only shallowly in very soft ground. Thus the two by combining their skills make an excellent team.[7] Boas relates the myth of Coyote and Badger in which the two wage a contest of their hunting skills to win the favors of a young Navajo girl. Whoever catches the most rabbits will be first to lie with her. Coyote cunningly traps Badger in a rabbit hole and takes all the rabbits both have caught to the girl. When Badger appears, Coyote's deception is revealed and he must yield to Badger, though both receive food from the girl.

While the various myths portray him as foolish, deceitful, and cunning, Coyote also possesses mystical powers that become obvious in his role in death. Hamilton Tyler explains in Pueblo Animals and Myths that Coyote is a "death figure, probably for the simple reason that he feeds on dead things and his stench is associated with carrion." The Pueblo's believe that "for every birth there must be a death, otherwise there would not be enough food." Originally, when people died, they came back again in four days. Coyote says he will die and not come back since if death is temporary, no one will be afraid to die. Hence when Coyote died, he did not come back. Tyler explains further that illnesses and accidents ending in death are believed to be caused by witches. Since Coyote is often thought of as "First Witch, a pet of witches, or the animal into which witches or their victimes are transformed," he plays a primary role in death.[8] It is believed by some that the coyote's cry foretells an impending death.

From creation to death the coyote-trickster figure has a role in Pueblo mythology. While it remains doubtful that he ever achieved the status of a diety or god, his role is nonetheless important. As trickster-clown his presence serves as a comic relief to alleviate the tension in otherwise serious ceremonies. His selfish motives and foolish antics serve to illuminate the flaws in human nature. Hartley Burr Alexander in Mythology of All Races (volume X) says:

> It is difficult to obtain a clear conception of the part which Coyote plays in the Indian's imagination. . . . In multitudes of stories he is represented as contemptible--deceitful, greedy, bestial with an erotic mania that leads him even to incest, often outwitted by the animals whom he endeavors to trick, without gratitude to those that help him; and yet, with all this, he is shown as a mighty magician, reducing the world to order and helping man with innumerable benefactions, perhaps less the result of his intention than the indirect outcome of his own efforts to satisfy his selfish appetite.[9]

A number of the coyote tales have been forgotten, but the majority of them have survived and have become a part of the heritage of the Indian people. They are told and retold not for their historical value or authenticity, but because they are funny and people enjoy hearing them.

One of the best known Coyote tales is "Coyote and Lark" included in Franz Boas' Keresan Texts. The Boas version, told in 1919 by Robert Marmon (Leslie Silko's great-grandfather) shows Coyote as the victim. Mother Coyote is taking water to her thirsty pups when Lark sings to her. Coyote, a victim of her own foolish pride, responds and in so doing spits out all the water. This happens four

times until Coyote pursues Lark. She bites the skin of what she believes to be Lark, but finds it is only a skin stuffed with stones; this results in all of Coyote's teeth falling out. She returns to her pups, only to find them all dead by this time. Continuing northward Coyote reaches a river where she stops to drink; seeing her own reflection she becomes frightened (she does not recognize herself). This happens three times until she is discovered, chased, and killed by dogs.[10]

In Storyteller Leslie Silko refers to this tale, retelling it as part of a longer piece about ethnographers Franz Boas and Elsie Parsons. She explains that the meadowlark uses her song to taunt Coyote until she becomes so upset she loses sight of her purpose, and her pups die of thirst. Silko explains some of the controversy her great-grandfather Robert Marmon (who told the story to Boas) encountered as a white man who married a Laguna woman and fathered mixed-breed children. Silko concludes:

> Maybe he chose that particular coyote story
> to tell Parsons
> because for him at Laguna
> that was 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.[11]

In another tale, "Skeleton Fixer," Silko retells the end part of "Coyote and the Blackbird Girls." In Boas' version Coyote hears the Blackbird-Girls singing while grinding corn. She joins them, bringing juniper berries. They trick her into falling into the house, spilling all the berries. The Blackbird-Girls eat all the berries and decide to fly to the top of the standing rock to drink water. By this

time Coyote has joined them and they each give her a feather so she can fly with them to the top. After reaching the top and drinking their fill, the Blackbird Girls leave, taking the feathers with them, and leaving Coyote with no way down. Old-Spider-Woman comes to her rescue, telling Coyote she will lower her down in a basket, but Coyote must not look up or she will fall. Coyote agrees, but halfway down she looks up; the basket breaks, and Coyote dies.

Badger-Old-Man comes along, covers Coyote, and singing, "The bones I put together. Pa, pa, papapapa," four times, revives her. Coyote departs to find the Blackbird Girls and gain revenge, with little thanks to Badger. She comes to a trap baited with meat; enters the trap, and is killed by a falling stone.[12] Thus Coyote's covetous and ungrateful nature along with a desire for retribution leads to her own destruction.

Of the Acoma version of this story, retold by Simon Ortiz, Patricia Clark Smith in Studies in American Indian Literature comments:

> Coyote Lady's only real failing is the irrepressible and highly human one of giving in to curiosity. The tale seems to me unusually sympathetic to Coyote. The Quail Women are capricious in their friendship, and, while their relish of the joke may be understood to lie in their desire to get revenge for Coyote Lady's past actions, within the tale, at least, she has done nothing to provoke them[13]

Ortiz' retelling reveals the contempt felt for Coyote, and also gives an explanation for the imminent demise of Coyote, presumably the result of Skeleton Fixer's curse:

Oh, its just you, Coyote--I thought
it was someone else.

And as Coyote ran away,
Skeleton Fixer called after her
.....
Go ahead and go, may you get crushed
by a falling rock somewhere....[14]

Although Leslie Silko does not retell the entire episode of "Coyote and the Blackbird-Girls," her poem "Skeleton Fixer" included in Storyteller relates the reconstruction of Coyote. Old Man Badger is the healer who magically rebuilds the body of Coyote and brings it back to life:

Old Man Badger traveled
from place to place
searching for skeleton bones.
There was something
only he could do with them. (ST p. 242)

Old Man Badger knows the exact way the parts of the puzzle fit together, from toe and leg bones to spine, ribs, and finally tail. "Though he didn't recognize the bones / he could not stop; / he loved them anyway." (ST p. 243) As Old Man Badger rebuilds Coyote, Silko reconstructs the ancient story through the progression of her poem. Just as Coyote's breath is restored through the repetitious chant reiterated by Badger, so are the Laguna's myths restored and preserved by the storyteller. That Silko intends this meaning becomes apparent from the very first stanza of the poem:

What happened here?
she asked
Some kind of accident?
Words like bones
scattered all over the place.... (ST p. 242)

"She" refers not to the badger, but to the storyteller. Like the Skeleton Fixer who receives no thanks but keeps on fixing the "poor scattered bones he finds," the storyteller continues telling. Putting the bones back together is like putting the stories back together. If the old stories and traditions can be restored, then nothing is ever really lost; the stories revitalize the people.

The covetous, greedy nature of Coyote is the basis for a tale Silko calls "Coyotes and the Stro'ro'ka Dancers." While no similar tale is recorded in Boas' Keresan Texts, he does note that Dr. Parsons wrote of "a well assimilated story" of Spanish origin.

> The Shtoroka dance in a deep cave. Six coyotes want to go down and try to descend by holding one another by the tail. One of them breaks wind and they all fall down and are killed by the fall.[15]

In Silko's tale a lone coyote atop a high mesa detects the Stro'ro'ka Dancers in the valley far below. Coyote's desire to observe the Stro'ro'ka Dancers becomes secondary to his avaricious greed for the banquet of food the dancers have brought to eat. He signals his fellow clansmen and devises a plan to lower themselves into the valley. Silko summarizes her story:

> The longer version is really funny. Coyote comes over to the edge of this mesa and peeks over and he sees these dancers. They're from a dance society that has died out; what they were doing down there was kind of mysterious. They had laid out all the food that they were going to eat when they got done dancing. The story is kind of cinemato-graphic. Coyote peeks down from way up high on the mesa, sees the food, and says, "Mmmm, wow, it looks good. But it's way down there! Then he calls his cousins, 'Ooooh, oooh,' and when they gather, he says he has this brilliant idea about the coyote chain. They're hesitant, afraid

> of falling, but he reassures them that everything's gonna go fine. I've thought about this a lot. The one thing he hadn't taken into consideration happened.[16]

Coyote's trickery has brought only death for him, but his misfortune is the dancers' fortune:

> And the Stro'ro'ka dancers
> down below
> stopped dancing
> and ran to the heap
> of dead coyotes
> glad becuase
> they wanted the skins
> of the coyotes
> to wear around their necks. (ST p. 234)

Silko concludes that this is the reason the dancers wear "the coyote skin neckpiece-- / because of long ago." (ST p. 234)

Hamilton Tyler relates the origin of wearing these pelts during dances to the Acoma story of an old fox carrying water to her young--a story similar to that told of coyote. Her young dead, the fox finds a new mate who dies when trapped by a young hunter. The hunter cures the foxhide and fits it into his girdle which is how the hides came into use as part of the attire for sacred dances. Whatever the origin, Tyler asserts that the use of the fox pelt (kin of coyote) "is the greatest role of the animal in Pueblo culture. . . ."[17] The intertwining of the two myths illustrates the way in which Coyote has become an integral part of Pueblo culture.

Silko includes a shorter version of this coyote story in "Toe'osh: A Laguna Coyote Story," a poem in which she equates coyote-trickery with that of modern tricksters. Coyote, she says, lost his original coat in a poker game and got his "ratty old fur coat" from

sparrows who covered him with pitch and "bits of old fur." (ST p. 237) Silko compares the coyote-trickster figure to the politician:

> Charlie Coyote wanted to be governor
> and he said that when he got elected
> he would run the other men off
> the reservation
> and keep all the women for himself. (ST p. 238)

Like Coyote, Silko's politician in trying to outfox the people became the victim of his own trickery. The people accept the ham and turkey bribes, and promise in return their votes, but on election day everyone "stayed home and ate turkey / and laughed." (ST p. 238) In considering the final stanza of the poem it becomes apparent that Silko views the white culture as one whose trickery has turned upon itself:

> Howling and roaring
> Toe'osh scattered white people
> out of bars all over Wisconsin
> He bumped into them at the door
> until they said
> 'Excuse me'
> And the way Simon meant it
> was for 300 or maybe 400 years. (ST p. 239)

Probably the most humorous of all Silko's coyote-trickster stories is "Coyote Holds a Full House in His Hand." Included as the final selection in Storyteller, this is the story of an unidentified Laguna man whose main purpose is to satiate his sexual desires. Like coyote, he was "good at making up stories to justify why things happened the way they did." (ST p. 259) He always had a ready excuse to avoid work: he was sick with liver trouble, he had cut his foot, or hurt his back. He had never married; that would have meant working to support a family. "He liked things just the way they were down

along the river after dark." Besides, "He had already promised his mother he wouldn't leave her alone in her old age." (ST p. 259)

Laguna Man's courtship of Mrs. Sekakaku seems to be going nowhere until he assures her and her niece that he is indeed a medicine man (though he doesn't usually let it be known like so many other men who do so just to attract women), and can cure Aunt Mamie of her dizzy spells. As a self-proclaimed medicine man he receives the treatment he feels is just and plays his act to advantage. "Once he got started he knew just how it should go. It was getting started that gave him trouble sometimes." (ST p. 263) Calling all the women of the Hopi pueblo together, he achieves sensual gratification by rubbing ashes on the calves of each woman in turn, assuring them that this is sure to heal Aunt Mamie. He "worked painstakingly with each one" until he was "out of breath and he knew he could not stand up to get to Aunt Mamie's bed so he bowed his head and pretended he was praying." Though his trickery seems to have worked, the Laguna man decides to quit while he is ahead, gathers his gifts of gratitude, and departs, already thinking ahead to his next feminine pursuit. "Like a lot of people, at one time he believed Hopi magic could outdo all the other Pueblos but now he saw that it was all the same from time to time and place to place." (ST p. 260)

That Silko intends her Laguna man as a reflection of the coyote-trickster is evident not only through the title of the story, but in his insatiable sexual appetite. The dogs bark at him as they would a witch, he is exceedingly lazy, and he often appears foolish.

Although he is smart enough to quit while he is ahead and not press his Laguna luck too far, he holds more than a full house in his hands, but may not be playing with a full deck!

In addition to being a cunning and deceitful trickster, Coyote may also play the role of culture hero. Remembering that as part witch he is able to take on many forms, including human, the role of Trickster in Silko's novel Ceremony bears consideration. In a paper written for a symposium on Ceremony entitled "Circular Design in Ceremony," Robert C. Bell explores the relationship of the coyote transformation myth used as part of Silko's framing poem, to the Red Antway myth of the Navaho:

> . . . the hoop transformation ceremony in Ceremony recapitulates, in astonishing detail, the procedures set forth in the Coyote Transformation rite in The Myth of the Red Antway, Male Evilway, recorded and translated by Father Berard Haile in the 1930's. Simple comparison of the two texts . . . reveals a likely source for Silko's hoop ceremony at the middle of the book (pp. 138-153). And in as much as the act of telling and retelling traditional stories is itself part of prescribed ritual, it requires nearly perfect fidelity. Indeed, Silko's telling is as significant as what she tells; repetition of story is comparable to recapitulation of ritual.[18]

In the Red Antway myth Coyote takes on the physical appearance of a young man in order to gain possession of his wife. Coyote overtakes the young man while he is out hunting and leaves him clothed in the coyote skin while Coyote himself returns to the hogan in the appearance of the young man. Coyote's eating and sexual habits are much more voracious than those of the young man. After four nights posing as the young man, Coyote's deception is discovered by the young

girl's mother who smells coyote scent on her daughter. The young man is tracked to the mountain where he has crawled, hungry and thirsty, in an attempt to escape from the skin that entraps him. He is unable to reply when asked if he is the young man; the only sound he can make is that like a coyote whine. The only hope for his release is through the help of the Bear People; with their instructions a sandpainting is made. Pollen Boy (the young man) is placed on the sandpainting with prayersticks, and a song with the proper words is intoned. Following this Pollen Boy is walked through the five hoops to begin his cure.[19]

Silko's coyote myth, paralleling the Red Antway myth, tells that Coyote takes possession of the body of a young hunter, forcing him to appear as a coyote. In Red Antway the deception is discovered when the "young hunter's" eating and sleeping habits change drastically. When food was brought, "he ate all of it, while the young man had not been in the habit of consuming all. . . . While the young man had been backward and reserved with his wife, this one was not so, he bothered her constantly all night long."[20] Similarly Silko's poem begins:

> His mother-in-law suspected something.
> She smelled coyote piss one morning.
> She told her daughter.
> She figured Coyote was doing this.
> She knew her son-in-law was missing.[21]

When the young hunter is found he is encased in the body of Coyote. For him to be saved the Bear People must be consulted; "'They are the only possible hope / they have the power to restore the mind.'" (C p. 147) The restoration ceremony involves creating a sandpainting:

They made Pollen Boy right in the center of
the white corn painting.
His eyes were blue pollen
his mouth was blue pollen
his neck was too
There were pinches of blue pollen
at his joints. (C p. 148)

Like the young hunter in the myth, Silko's Tayo is encased in a skin that is not his own. The habitation of his body is nearly complete. "For a long time he had been white smoke. He did not realize that until he left the hospital, because white smoke had no consciousness of itself." (C p. 14) He is invisible because he is not in control of his body. The last vestiges of Tayo's mind fight to regain control because he "did not want to be invisible when he died, so he pulled himself loose, one last time." (C p. 17) The transformation begins slowly and Tayo's role as culture hero is revealed gradually. Ake Hultkrantz in The Religions of the American Indians delineates the role of culture hero as follows:

> In his serious function the culture hero is primarily originator of the present conditions in nature and culture and of human fate. He is, as has been mentioned, an assistant creator or transformer of the world. . . . He is spoken of as the wandering magician who changes the shape of the landscape and divides living beings into animals and humans . . . the culture hero steals fire, daylight (or the sun), and water . . . sets free the game. . . . Finally, the culture hero is responsible for human fate.[22]

Tayo believes he is the cause of the present state of his land (the drought), knowing that he "prayed away the rain," causing its sickness. But he knows his own sickness "was only part of something larger, and his cure would be found only in something great and

inclusive of everything." (C p. 132) So Tayo becomes Pollen Boy and the Scalp Ceremony begins his gradual cure. By combining her poem-myth and the narrative story, Silko unites the two to show how Tayo's cure lies in the ceremonial rituals of time. Betonie's helper Shush, whose name means "Bear," becomes one of the Bear People who, according to myth, have magical powers to restore the mind. As Tayo is led through the five hoops his cure begins:

> At the Dark Mountain
> born from the mountain
> walked along the mountain
> I will bring you through my hoop,
> I will bring you back.
>
> Following my footprints
> walk home
> following my footprints
> come home, happily
> return belonging to your home
> return to long life and happiness again
> return to long life and happiness. (C p. 150)

This hoop ceremony only begins the long journey back for Tayo as explained by Robert Bell:

> The hoop ritual itself recapitulates the prototype curing ceremony given in the myth by Bear People, and, as Father Haile noted, the ritual of passing through the hoops 'symbolizes the removal of a shroud with with evil dreams and visions of ghosts have enveloped the mind, much as the dried skin of the coyote encased the hero's body in the legend.'[23]

Tayo recognizes the symbolic joining of his world and that of the sandpainting; "the world below and the sand paintings inside became the same that night." Like the mythical hero, his quest is part of his cure. His dream following the ceremony on the Chuska Mountains foretells his journey ahead. Waking, Tayo is ready to begin, "He

wanted to leave that night to find the cattle; there would be no peace until he did." (C p. 152) Bell explains Tayo's search:

> Tayo's search for the cattle becomes the mythical hero's quest for wholeness; even though the cattle and the land have been stolen, this does not mean the end; events following the hoop transformation only complete the ceremony begun in the opening pages of the book.[24]

While in her previous stories, Silko's trickster has often been a bungler and a victim of his own deceptions, Tayo becomes the archetypical culture-hero, a deliverer of his people, a master trickster of sorts who outwits the trickery assaulting his world. Ironically while Auntie believes it is Rocky who will provide a new life for his people it is instead Tayo who becomes the hero twin, and like the mythical Twin Heros, Ma'see'wi and Ou'yu'ye'wi who, with the help of Hummingbird and Fly overcome evil, himself overcomes the witchery grasping his land and his people.

They unraveled
the dead skin
Coyote threw
on him.

They cut it up
bundle by bundle.

Every evil
which entangled him
was cut
to pieces. (C p. 271)

Perhaps the best total view of Trickster is presented by Paul Radin in his book The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology:

> The symbol which Trickster embodies is not a static one. It contains within itself the promise

> of differentiation, the promise of god and man. For this reason every generation occupies itself with interpreting Trickster anew. No generation understands him fully but no generation can do without him. Each had to include him in all its theologies, in all its cosmogonies, despite the fact that it realized that he did not fit properly into any of them, for he represents not only the undifferentiated and distant past, but likewise the undifferentiated present within every individual. This constitutes his universal and persistent attraction. And so he became and remained everything to every man--god, animal, human being, hero, buffoon, he who was before good and evil, denier, affirmer, destroyer and creator. If we laugh at him, he grins at us. What happens to him happens to us.[25]

NOTES

[1]Paul Radin, The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology (New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1956), p. 164.

[2]Radin, pp. 165, 156, xi.

[3]Hamilton Tyler, Pueblo Gods and Myths (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964), p. 197.

[4]Hamilton Tyler, Pueblo Animals and Myths (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1975), P. 162.

[5]Franz Boas, Keresan Texts (New York: The American Ethnological Society, 1928), p. 244.

[6]Dorothy Pletcher, "Coyote Scatters the Stars," Nature Magazine, No. 24 (1934), p. 280.

[7]Tyler, Pueblo Animals and Myths, pp. 160-61.

[8]Tyler, Pueblo Animals and Myths, pp. 167-8.

[9]Hartley Burr Alexander, Mythology of All Races: North American, X (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, Inc., 1964), p. 142.

[10]Boas, pp. 164-65, 270-71.

[11]Leslie Marmon Silko, Storyteller (New York: Seaver Books, 1981), pp. 255-56. (Hereafter indicated within text at ST.)

[12]Boas, pp. 161-64.

[13]Patricia Clark Smith, "Coyte Ortiz: Canis Iatrans Iatrans in the Poetry of Simon Ortiz," in Studies in American Indian Literature, ed. Paula Gunn Allen (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1983), p. 205.

[14]Smith, p. 205.

[15]Boas, p. 269.

[16]Leslie Marmon Silko, in This Song Remembers, ed. Jane B. Katz (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1980), p. 192.

[17]Tyler, Pueblo Animals and Myths, p. 157.

[18]Robert C. Bell, "Circular Design in Ceremony," American Indian Quarterly, 5, No. 1 (1979), 48.

[19]Father Berard Haile, trans., Coyote Transformation Prototype Ceremony from "The Myth of Red Antway, Male Evilway," rpt. in American Indian Quarterly, 5, No. 1 (1979), p. 58-61.

[20]Haile, p. 58.

[21]Leslie Marmon Silko, Ceremony (New York: New American Library, Inc., 1977), p. 146. (Hereafter indicated within text by C.)

[22]Ake Hultkrantz, The Religions of the American Indians (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), pp. 35-36.

[23]Bell, p. 50.

[24]Bell, p. 50.

[25]Radin, pp. 168-69.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the work of Leslie Silko, the role of storyteller is illustrated as one that is multi-faceted. That the storyteller is a purveyor of stories is most obviously true; she is also an entertainer and educator, a linguist, biographer, and historian. Though her works are creations of her own, they are also creations of her culture. Stories and legend of her own Laguna people are the foundation for those retold as well as for those told the first time.

As entertainment Silko's stories are as much for the tellers as for those listening:

> In the wintertime
> at night
> we tell coyote stories
> and drink Spanada by the stove.[1]

Like any art, storytelling is for all involved, but has certain precepts that must be followed. Before the teller begins, he must be fed:

> 'He wouldn't begin until we gave him
> something real good to eat--
> roasted pinons or some jerky.
> Then he would start telling the story.
> That's what you're supposed to do, you know,
> you're supposed to feed the storyteller good
> things." (ST p. 110)

Then the storyteller may begin:

> The Laguna people
> always begin their stories
> with 'humma-hah':
> that means 'long ago.'
> And the ones who are listening
> say 'aaaa-eh' (ST p. 38)

After the background information is given and the scene set, anything can happen; the story may even end up in a song. The teller is in control; however, although details may change, the basic story remains the same from one telling to the next.

> But sometimes what we call 'memory' and what we call 'imagination' are not so easily distinguished.
>
> I know Aunt Susie and Aunt Alice would tell me stories they had told me before but with changes in details or descriptions. The story was the important thing and little changes here and there were really part of the story. There were even stories about the different versions of stories and how they imagined these differing versions came to be. (ST p. 227)

A good storyteller is careful and thoughtful, and makes the story come alive for those listening. Often the stories were very long and seemed to go on forever (as Silko illustrates in "Storyteller" with the old man's bear story), but this did not seem to matter if the teller was adept at his art. Silko describes a good storyteller in "A Geronimo Story:"

> It was beautiful to hear Siteye talk; his words were careful and thoughtful, but they followed each other smoothly to tell a good story. He would pause to let you get a feeling for the words; and even the silence was alive in his stories. (ST p. 215)

As educator, Silko takes advantage of the opportunity to teach of Pueblo ways through her writing. The many parenthetical comments inserted in Storyteller as well as the stories and poems themselves explain things traditional to Pueblo ways. One such tradition is that of placing a feather in the hair of the dead. As well as directly

explaining this (ST p. 14), she illustrates the same in "The Man to Send Rain Clouds" when Leon ties the small gray feather in his grandfather's long white hair. (ST p. 182) She teaches family tradition: the mother's oldest brother was the one who disciplined the children (ST p. 172) and mythology in stories like that of the origin of butterflies:

> And today they say that acoma has more beautiful butterflies--
> red ones, white ones, blue ones, yellow ones.
> They came
> from this little girl's clothing. (ST p. 15)

She is a linguist, explaining the meaning of the Laguna terms she uses in her writing. From "A'moo'ooh," the Laguna expression of endearment for a young child (ST p. 34), to "Yash toah," the hardened crust on corn meal mush (ST p. 8), the Laguna words make her stories come alive. The old ways are explained: using juniper ash to clean teeth (ST pl 35) and yucca roots, "soap weed" to keep white hair from yellowing. (ST p. 34) The use of two languages, one for the living and one for the dead, is acknowledged: ". . . when he spoke, he used the words to speak of the dead." (ST p. 45)

Silko's role as biographer, though in a sense visual because of the pictures her words create, is not in photographs; it is a biography of the stories and the people who make up those stories, those people whose stories she tells anew. Silko's own Grandpa Hank, who attended Sherman Institute in Riverside, California, and had hopes of becoming an automobile designer but ended up as a store clerk, provides part of the basis for Old Betonie in Ceremony who tells Tayo:

"'She sent me to school. Sherman Institute. Riverside California. . . . I told her I didn't want to go.'"[2] Her Grandma A'mooh told her many of the stories she heard as a child, and may have provided the basis for those characters in Silko's work such as Ayah in "Lullaby." Her relationship to those of her family whose lives and stories have shaped her own is perhaps best described in her reference to Aunt Susie, an educated woman who, Silko notes, always had time to answer questions:

> 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. (ST pp. 4-6)

So too does Leslie Silko retell the history of her people. That she is aware and even knowledgeable of the work of ethnographers Franz Boas and Elsie Parsons is evident in her writing. The extent to which values their work or any part thereof is somewhat questionable, acknowledging the humor she directs thereupon:

> I started writing a story about ethnologists continually milking their 'informants.' When I started to write, I started to laugh. I never did get past the first encounter. This Charlie Coyote type is starting to size up the anthropologist. When he leaves, someone says to the Coyote, 'What'd you tell him that for? Those are outrageous lies.'[3]

Recognizing the trickery attributed to Coyote, and his low value placement in pueblo society, one cannot help but feel the disdain with which Silko regards ethnologists. Certainly some of the

animosity she feels has basis: "Ethnologists blame the Marmon brothers / for all kinds of factions and trouble at Laguna" (ST p. 25)) and may account for the derision:

> Boas, as it turn out
> was tone-deaf
> and the Laguna language is tonal
> so it is fortunate he allowed Ms. Parsons
> to do the actual collecting of the stories.
> (ST p. 254)

The fact that Franz Boas' Keresan Texts is valuable as a basis for establishing the authenticity of Leslie Marmon Silko's Laguna tales remains indisputable. That her own writing is based directly or even indirectly thereupon is doubtful, but rather it is more probable that her writings are a result of the oral tradition of her people. The pureness and longevity of this tradition is evidenced in the striking similarities of Silko's tales to those related by Boas.

In "Bravura," a story included in Kenneth Rosen's The Man to Send Rain Clouds, Silko writes of a young student-poet's journey "back to the land." Though White, Bravura believes that by physically placing himself with the Indians and living as they do, he can experience their life and write it. He doesn't want to write about it, he wants to become a part of it.

> That was another thing he liked to marvel at: how the people who are born in this country appreciate it the least, how it takes someone from the outside to really appreciate it.[4]

The irony of the story is that, like the ethnographers, Bravura cannot truly understand or appreciate (or despise) anyone's life but his own. He may describe and evaluate life, but unless he is writing about his

own, that description and evaluation will be done using a set of values that are uniquely his. The values of one people are not necessarily those of another. The story of the people must be told by one who is of the people.

Clearly, Silko's own belief in the importance of one's family, one's culture, and in being a part thereof is expressed in the central theme of love woven throughout Ceremony. Love is the force that conquers the destroyers, the manipulators, the witches who operate and thrive on hatred, wickedness, and separateness. Love overpowers the forces of evil and bring Tayo back to an equilibrium with himself, his people, and his land.

It is Tayo's love for Rocky that motivates him to turn from his homeland and follow Rocky to a war he believes is not theirs. Only through seeing the face of his Uncle Josiah, one he loves, in the death face of the enemy, and thus recognizing the oneness of their people, does Tayo recognize that war is not one people against another; rather it is the force of evil--the destroyers--against the force of good--love.

It is love that leads Tayo back to himself. Love of his family, his Uncle Josiah, the Night Swan, Ts'eh, and love of his own Indian heritage lead him back to physical and spiritual health. It is this love that will save us all, not a love of material things, of a particular individual, or of power or authority, but a love that is natural and genuine, religious or moral.

The ceremony, as in Silko's novel, is not just for any one individual, but is (or can be) for all of us. Like Tayo, we must be ready if the ceremony is to work. No one individual wants to begin the change; we are afraid no one else will follow and the ceremony will fail. We might be right, and if we are, that is the true tragedy; then the destroyers have won. But Silko doesn't believe this; her novel is one of hope. Her hope is for all of us; she believes the ceremony is for all of us. In the ceremony, through love, is humanity's salvation.

NOTES

[1]Leslie Marmon Silko, Storyteller (New York: Seaver Books, 1981), p. 236. (Hereafter indicated within text by ST.)

[2]Leslie Marmon Silko, Ceremony (New York: New American Library, Inc., 9177), p. 127.

[3]Leslie Marmon Silko, in This Song Remembers, Ed. Jane B. Katz (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1980), p. 191.

[4]Leslie Marmon Silko, "Bravura" in The Man to Send Rain Clouds, ed. Kenneth Rosen (New York: Random House, Inc., 1975), p. 154.

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