CHAPTER II

VOICE OF TRADITION: GRAND MOTHER'S/GRAND FATHER'S LINEAGE

Out of her own body she pushed
silver thread, light, air
and carried it carefully on the dark, flying
where nothing moved

Out of her body she extruded
shining wire, life, and wove the light
on the void

From beyond time,
beyond oak trees and bright clear water flow,
she was given the work of weaving the strands
of her body, her pain, her vision
into creation, and the gift of having created,
to disappear

After her,
the women and the men weave blankets into tales
of life,
memories of light and ladders,
infinity-eyes, and rain.
after her I sit on my laddered rain-bearing rug
and mend the tear with string.

(Allen, Grand mother 106)

Tradition, as the voice of Orality, in the absence of written accounts as History, plays a major role in structuring contemporary Native narratives and enunciating the Native world view. It provides the Native woman writer with the impetus to create/re-create, and constitutes the milieu to articulate the "voices remembered"/re-membered
from my (their) blood" (Chrystos, cited in Kelly 1991:124) Tradition, as a method of memory, situates the Native women's narratives in the Native Oral cultures and thereby establishes the thread of continuity from the oral form to the written, from (hi)story telling in person to storytelling in print. An attempt is made in this chapter to analyze tradition as a presence in the Native women's texts highlighting the importance of Native Oral tradition/religion as the grand narrative for contemporary Native women's narratives, the relevance of myths and legends and lores in structuring their world views and the presence of grandmother/grandfather figure as the source of stories, in transmitting history as memory. The voice of tradition or traditionalism as a Native perspective or world view polemicizes issues like (hi)story telling while positing Orality as remembered history.

Tradition is variously defined by the Webster's Dictionary as a) an inherited established, or customary pattern of thought, action or behavior (as a religious practice or social custom, b) the handing down of information, belief and customs by word of mouth or by example from one generation to another without written instruction; c) cultural continuity in social attitudes and institutions, d) a characteristic manner, method or style. All these aspects of tradition are taken into account here as it makes complex the problem of voicing tradition in and through Native women's texts. The awareness of tradition structures the narrative of these texts, while disrupting the notion of western conventionalized generic patterns.

Native scholars and critics such as Arnold Krupat and Paula Gunn Allen have emphasized the necessity of understanding Orality as the shaping spirit in most of the contemporary Native writing. For the Native woman writer, writing is an act of memory; of remembering the voices in the tribal past, collated in the tribal memory. The tribal memory, in turn, includes the human beings' relationship with things animate and inanimate (strictly speaking, the concept that things are inanimate in the world is itself an anomaly from the tribal perspective) through time immemorial. Wendy Rose, a Hopi/Miwok writer makes this clear in the poem The Walking Prayer Stick (1984).

We map our lives this way: trace our lineage by the corn, find our words in the flute,
touch the shapes that feed us with dry seed,
We grow as shrines grow from human belief,
We sing a penetration though our pottery bodies,
Nothing is old
about us yet. (cited in Green 1984 194)

In mapping their lives and narratives, the Native women writers trace their lineage from mythic/real grand parents. The grandmother figure signifying tradition appears variously in the texts as Spider Woman, Thought Woman, Creator, Grandmother/s, Nature, Earth, and so on. Similarly, grand fathers as medicine men, as repositorie of stories too occur in certain texts. However, the androgynous aspect of these grandfathers is stressed to evolve a necessarily gynecentric perspective. In positing tradition as history, the chapter follows Oral tradition approach employed by Native literary critics rather than the oral history approach propounded by historians like James B. Lagrand since the emphasis here is on tradition as historical context in fiction.

James B. Lagrand, in his essay *Whose Voices Count? Oral Sources and Twentieth Century American Indian History* (1997) stresses the importance of the spoken word in American Indian cultures: "All the powerful and fantastic tribal stories - that spoke of the origins of the earth, culture heroes, and crafty tricksters - were transmitted exclusively by oral communication in America's native cultures, making the spoken word appear to carry even greater power" (p.73). Lagrand emphasizes Brian Swann's view that American Indians have a truly sacramental sense of language in which object and word are fused together in a uniquely creative process." (p.74) At the same time, he makes a distinction between Oral traditions and Oral histories: the term oral tradition will be used to describe a type of oral source in which a message considered important by a group of people, but not witnessed first hand by the narrator is passed from one generation to another. Often the message passes through a formal, structured, and even ritualized process of transmission through this process, narrators of oral traditions try to stay as close as possible to
the original message. Therefore, the recounting of an oral tradition is usually not a spontaneous but rather a deliberate process that emphasizes continuity. Oral tradition also emphasizes the group or community over the individual (Lagrand 1997:75).

This seems to be the approach followed by many Native American writers especially Silko in *Ceremony* and Allen in *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows*. On the other hand, Lagrand uses the term Oral history,

to describe a type of oral source in which an individual addresses experiences and feelings experienced first hand in the narrative form. It is "an eye witness account" as opposed to one handed down by word of mouth to later generations; thus there is no process of transmission in the oral histories much less a formally structured process. Oral history concerns connections between past and present and between the individual who is remembering and groups or communities to which he or she has belonged. Thus Oral history does not speak about either the past or the individuals in the abstract, but in the contexts in which they have lived. (Lagrand 1997:76)

Lagrand further elucidates his concept of Oral history as construction of memory in a subjective account influenced by the individual's relationship with other people, institutions, structures of power and authority. Experiences of the past lend meaning and sense to the events as well as attempt to teach lessons in the present. The recounting of the Oral history according to him necessitates the initiative and intervention of an interviewer or listener who asks pertinent and open ended questions throughout. Oral history is thus perceived as a collaborative effort understood as a dialogue between two people (p 76).

Lagrand privileges Oral history methodology over the Oral tradition approach followed by literature scholars since the later approach stresses the communal over the individual and can "in some cases perpetuate an ahistorical view of American Indians." (p 81). Lagrand even goes on to state that Arnold Krupat's conception of the self in
Indian Autobiographies “has more to do with changes he perceives in theories of literary criticism than with the changes in American Indian community and societies” But then he obviously does not consider the role theory plays in constructing history Though Lagrand’s argument seems apparently well researched and grounded probably in fostering methodologies of Native American Oral histories, Oral tradition approach is more pertinent in analyzing Native American literary texts as methods in memory evoking a traditional perspective The thrust of the study in this chapter is the presence of tradition in the told-to-the page narratives of Native Women Writers, Silko, Erdrich, Allen, Culleton, Armstrong and Maracle

**Tradition/Grandmother in the American Texts:**

Leslie Marmon Silko and Paula Gunn Allen, two Laguna Pueblo writers, posit their narratives in the Laguna Pueblo Oral tradition. In their novels, *Ceremony* and *The Woman who Owned the Shadows*, the Laguna creator Thought Woman/Spider Woman is evoked as the creator/originator of Silko’s and Allen’s narratives. Silko in her novel *Ceremony* evokes the Laguna Oral tradition as Ts’its’tsi’nako, Thought Woman and the novel itself can be read as a ceremony or healing ritual

Ts’its’tsi’nako, Thought Woman,
is sitting in her room
and whatever she thinks about
appears (C:1).

Thought Woman Spider is the creator of all the things in the Universe including Silko's narrative:

Thought Woman, the Spider,
named things and
as she named them
they appeared.
She is sitting in her room thinking of a story now
I am telling you the story
she is thinking (C 1)

Allen too evokes the Laguna creator to whom she dedicates her novel along with her great grandmother Meta Atseya Gunn “To Na’yiya Iyatiku, and to Spider Grandmother, Thought Woman who thinks the stories I write down” (WOS·1) In the Laguna/Keres creation story, Thought Woman Spider creates the Universe. Allen describes her presence and significance at length in *The Sacred Hoop. Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* (1992):

In the beginning was thought, and her name was Woman The Mother, the Grandmother, recognized from earliest times into the present among those peoples of the Americas who kept to the eldest traditions, is celebrated in social structures, law, custom and the oral-tradition. To her we owe our lives, and from her comes our ability to endure, regardless of the concerted assaults on our lives, on Her being, for the past five hundred years of colonization. She is the old woman who tends the fires of life. She is the Old Woman Spider who weaves us together in a fabric of interconnection. She is the Eldest God, the one who Remembers and Re-members; and though the history of the past five hundred years has taught us bitterness and rage, we endure into the present, alive, certain of our significance, certain of her centrality, her identity as the Sacred Hoop of Be-ing (Allen 1992 11)

Allen and Silko, both derive their narratives and re-claim their voices from the Spider Woman’s memories and thoughts. Edith Swan remarks on the centrality of Spider woman to Silko’s *Ceremony*. “As author, Silko taps Spider Woman’s vivifying principles of articulation. Silko becomes Her voice, Her story teller, following Her techniques. So Silko attributes her story as well as her literary conventions to the authority of ontological genesis, to the feminine universe maker who is a spinner of names”
Silko, herself, elucidates the relevance of the Laguna Pueblo creation stories in her article, “Language and Literature from a Pueblo Perspective” (1981). “In the beginning . Thought Woman thought of all these things, and all these things are held together as one holds many things together in a single thought” (p.56) This is precisely what Silko attempts to realize in Ceremony. Edith Swan notes that the "Spider Woman's tightly woven universe is woman-centered, spun with the warp and weft of matrilineal structure" (Swan 1991: 39) Allen too obviously subscribes to this view of a tribal universe that is essentially gynecentric and quintessential creatrix who is necessarily a woman.

Old Spider Woman is one name for this quintessential spirit, and Serpent Woman is another. Corn Woman is one aspect of her, and Earth Woman is another, and what they have together made is called Creation, Earth, creatures, plants and light... .Her variety and multiplicity testify to her complexity, she is the true creatrix for she is thought itself, from which all is born. She is the necessary precondition for material creation, and she, like all of her creation, is fundamentally female - potential and primary....Thought Woman is not a passive personage; her potentiality is dynamic and unimaginably powerful. She brought corn and agriculture, potting, weaving, social systems, religion, ceremony, ritual, building, memory, intuition, and their expressions in language, creativity, dance, human-to-animal relations, and she gave these offerings power and authority and blessed the people with the ability to provide for themselves and their progeny... .Central to Keres theology is the basic idea of the creatrix as She who thinks rather than She who bears, of woman as creation thinker and female thought as origin of material and non-material reality (Allen 1992: 13-15).

Allen and Silko, both trace their lineage from the Laguna creatrix, Spider Woman and her various emanations Iyatiku, Corn Woman, Earth Woman and so on. The Laguna creator holds together threads of Silko’s and Allen's novels. Allen in the “Prologue” to Part I of The Woman who Owned the Shadows evokes the Laguna creation story:
In the beginning was the Spider. She divided the world. She made it thinking thus she made the world. She drew lines that crossed each other. Thus were the directions. Thus the powers. Thus were the quadrants. Thus the solstices. Thus were the seasons. Thus was woman (WOS 1)

The Spider Grandmother creates the world with the power of her thought. She creates the twin sisters, Naotsete and Uretsete, by singing into the medicine pouches. "And the Spider sang. She thought to name the twain. Long she thought, singing. And she knew one was She who matters and the other was She who Remembers. So she named them Uretsete and Naotsete. The women who made all that lives on earth. Who made the world. Who formed matter from thought, singing." (WOS 2) The twin sisters created everything in the world with the help of Spider Woman Grandmother and also set the pattern for Pueblo existence. "Thus they sent their thought into the void. Singing, chanting sent they their thought, the thought of the Spider out into the void. Thus finished they everything and set everything in place." (WOS 2).

Allen thus situates, Ephania's/Allen's narrative, within the void of Spider Woman's thoughts as Silko places Tayo's narrative as well as her own in the thought of Ts'its' ts'i'nako, Thought Woman.

Spider Grandmother/Thought Woman has different emanations in mythical as well as fictional characters. In Ceremony, she is Thought Woman, Corn Woman, Spider Grandmother—variously represented in the verse of the Pueblo Oral tradition that punctuates Tayo's narrative. She is at the same time Tayo's grandmother, Betonie's Mexican grandmother, Night Swan, TS'eh, Earth Woman, the various emanations of the feminine that Tayo encounter in his healing process and return to the Pueblo community. In The Woman who Owned the Shadows, the thought of the Spider Woman appears in various guises in her daughters and grand daughters in Meta Atseya Gunn, Allen's great grandmother to whom she has dedicated the book; Sylvia or Shimanna, Ephania's grandmother and the Sky Woman who falls from the sky evoked in Ephania's narrative to lend a mythic pattern to Ephania's own life/fall/narrative.
The presence of the Grandmother as creatrix, as the voice of tradition, is in tune with the gynecentric values and the webs of matrilineal tradition of the Laguna Pueblo from which Allen and Silko weave their lives/narratives. In the case of Louise Erdrich, the Chippewa/Objibwe writer from the Turtle Mountain Chippewa Reservation of North Dakota, the matrilineal/gynecentric presence of the grandmother is, however, not overt. In *Tracks*, a novel of complex webs and interconnections, with a bi-polar narrative, Nanapush, the tribal elder echoes the voice of tradition whereas Pauline, the mixed blood Indian puts forth the assimilationist argument. Erdrich presents a grandfather narrator Nanapush who narrates the story of the Turtle Mountain Chippewas or Anishinaabe of North Dakota between the years 1912 and 1914, to Lulu, Fleur's daughter, in order to empower her.

Fleur is described by Nanapush as "the funnel of our history" (T.61) and it is significant that Nanapush narrates the story of the tribe to Lulu. He tells Lulu: "Granddaughter, you are the child of the invisible, the ones who disappeared, when along with the first bitter punishments of the early winter a new sickness swept down. The consumption it was called by young father Damien..." (T:71-72). Nanapush attempts to make the invisible past visible to Lulu and his power to do so is derived from his life experiences and perceptions of that invisible past—of having witnessed the events first hand:

My girl, I saw the passing of the times you will never know
I guided the last buffalo hunt I saw the last bear shot I shot the last beaver with a pelt of more than two years growth. I spoke aloud the words of the government treaty, and refused to sign the settlement papers that would take away our woods and lake I axed the last birch that was older than I, and I saved the last Pillager. Fleur, the one you will not call mother." (T.2)

Nanapush's narrative emphasizes not only his suitability to narrate her history and map her lineage to Lulu, his narrative also, as Nancy. J. Paterson points out, shows the complexity of "relating the past in the form of history" (1984.985).
The problems of constructing alternate histories, "of forging a new historicity," which Paterson elucidates will be discussed at length in the ensuing chapters. Paterson's article, however, reinstates the role of Oral tradition in empowering the Native women with a sense of history, to trace their lineage from the grandmother/grandfather.

Nanapush narrates the history of the Chippewas to Lulu on the eve of her marriage to "no good Morrissey" in order to prevent her joining that clan by marriage. "Granddaughter, if you join this clan, I predict, the union will not last. Listen to experience and marry wisely, I always did" (T. 182). Nanapush's authority to advise Lulu is derived from his being entangled with the Pillager clan, initially through Fleur and later through Lulu herself. Nanapush elucidates this connection to Lulu in his narrative:

Since I saved her (Fleur) from the sickness, I was entangled with her. Not that I knew it at first. Only looking back is there a pattern. I was a wine of wild grapes that twined the timbers and drew them close. Or may be I was a branch coming from the Kashpaws, that lived long enough to touch the next tree over, which was Pillagers, of whom there were only two-Moses and Fleur-far cousins, related not so much by blood as by name and chance survival. Or may be, there was just me, Nanapush, in the thick as ever. The name had a bearing on what happened, later as well, for it was through Fleur Pillager, that the name Nanapush was carried on and won't die with me, won't rot in a case of bones and leather. There is a story to it the way there is a story to all, never visible while it is happening, only after when an old man sits dreaming and talking in his chair, the design springs clear (T:34).

Nanapush saves the lives of both Fleur and Lulu and takes over the role of Fleur, the mother, in Lulu's life. This is apparent in his advice to Lulu on marriage and children which emphasize his androgynous tribal identity as the voice of tradition.

Silko too, in Tayo's narrative in the Ceremony, reiterates "that there is a story to all" and there is a pattern to these stories: "He turned Every where he looked, he saw a
world made of stories as old Grandma called them. It was a world alive, always changing and moving, if you knew where to look, you could see it, sometimes almost imperceptible like the motion of the stars across the sky" (C:95).

Tayo, a World War II Veteran, alienated from his community due to his liminality as a half - breed and his psychological experiences due to the impact of the war, retraces the pattern of his existence within the Pueblo community, by taking re-course to the Oral tradition and ceremonies which link him to his tribal past. Similarly, in The Woman who Owned the Shadows, Ephanie Atencio, the half breed protagonist, in "her journey towards" psychic balance finds parallels between her life and the lives of the god women (as they are preserved in the oral tradition) and this aids her find that balance". (Allen 1992 · 99), Ephanie traces the pattern of her life through the stories Vanessa Holford remarks on the role of tradition in structuring Allen's / Ephanie's narrative: "Gunn - Allen creates layers of meaning and cycles of memory in Ephanie’s story that are informed by ritual and tribal membership" (Holford 1994 · 101)

Ephanie, at the beginning of the novel, experiences a sense of derangement which parallels that of Tayo's in Ceremony:

May be I just think I read. Pretending. May be a witch makes me think there are books To make me afraid. To steal my mind Or may be I'm really asleep. Dreaming. May be I make them all up in my sleep... She knew she was losing control Was scaring herself But the lights seemed so alive So evil. Those unalive manmade things seemed too alive Even if they are not to be feared, she feared them. And couldn't convince herself otherwise (WOS:7).

Both Ephanie and Tayo are conscious of their hybridity emphasized through Ephanie's name "Epiphany. Effie. An almost name. An almost event. A half blood. A half breed (WOS:3) and Tayo's green eyes. Tayo's memories are significantly the color of "white smoke" at the beginning of the novel: "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. He inhabited a winter gray fog on a distant elk mountain where hunters are lost indefinitely and their own bones mark the boundaries” (C.14-15)

Tayo's memories and thoughts are tangled with the incidents from his past and his derangement results from his inability to disentangle them 1 Tayo's predicament results from his sense of alienation from the community, his rejection by Auntie and others and his inability to connect with his tribal past - to perceive rightly the entangled filaments of the Spider web of his Laguna Pueblo world. Tayo's refusal to remember is paralleled by that of Ephanie's in The Woman who Owned Shadows: “As gray as the light that came through the door  The old blue door she had just opened  Ancient sign of entering. Spinning a dream momentarily free for her to look at  But she let it slip away. Distracted by the cold” (WOS 3)

Ephanie's derangement results from her sense of alienation from the Pueblo community; the sense of loss she feels at her separation from Elena, her childhood Chicana friend; the sense of guilt instilled in her because of her lesbian leanings by the nuns in her school, as well as her destructive relationships with the three men in her life—her first husband, her lover Stephen, a Laguna Indian man and later with Thomas Yoshuri, a second generation Nisei Japanese American. The men especially Stephen and Thomas, as Holford points out, refuse to hear her stories: "Both men turn their frustrations, inability to live with their own realities on her. Victimized they become her victimizers"  (Holford 1994: 105).

The events in Ephanie's life parallel the events mentioned in the Prologues to the four parts of Allen's text, as indicated in the chapter and section titles Hansen notes

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1 He could get no rest as long as the memories were tangled with the present, tangled up like the colored threads from Old Grandma's wicker sewing basket when he was a child and he had carried them outside to play and they had spilled out of his arms into the summer weeds and rolled away in all directions and then he had hurried to pick them up before Auntie found him. He could feel it inside his skull - the tension of little threads being pulled and how it was with tangled things, things tied together and as he tried to pull them apart and rewind them into their places, they snagged and tangled even more" (C.7)
The Prologue to the novel contains its essence. Here Allen redesigns her own creation myth and in the process she feminizes and personalizes the myth of the Spider woman and her twin so that it becomes a means of viewing and revealing the events of the narrative to come. Like the novelist Allen herself, Spider places her will "on the world through art and weaves her design through the novel" (Hansen 1990 35).

In the first part of the text, the pattern of Ephanie’s and Elena's relationship is traced through the twin sisters, Uretsete and Naotsete in the Prologue: "With each other, they were one doubled. They were thus complete" (WOS 22) Ephanie and Elena had "known themselves and their surroundings in terms of each other's eyes". “All those years, inspite of distance, inspite of difference, inspite of change, they understood the exact measure of their relationship, the twinning, the twinning” (WOS 22) The twin motif repeated in the Prologue to section II, Rite of Exorcism, serves to emphasize the twin motif emphasized in Ephanie's relationship at first with Elena, and later with Teresa, in Ephanie's narrative, it also serves to subvert/invert ironically the events in Ephanie's life, her marriage and divorce to Thomas. Iyatiku's quarrel with Naotsete in the Laguna Oral narrative inscribed in the Prologue to section II gains significance in the light of Ephanie's relationship with Teresa, its ups and downs.

Ephanie's fall from the tree from which she jumps at Stephen's instigation is traced through the Laguna story of the woman who jumped from the sky, a victim of her husband's jealousy, just as Ephanie probably was a victim of Stephen's jealousy. Ephanie's entrance into the world of the Spider Woman through remembering/falling is anticipated in the Prologue to section IV which deals with the effect of the Spider Woman on those who come upon her uninitiated. The four sections in Allen's narrative signify the "four directions in which Ephanie traces her experiences: New Mexican colonial history, her intercultural family life, tribal tradition, and personal emotion and perception". (Allen 1992 99) The four sections also signify "the four rivers that flowed into the hole in the lower most world", from four cardinal directions", as Paul Zolbrod citing Allen points out (Zolbrod 1987 31). The hole probably signifies the Shipap, or
the origin place, the abode of the Spider Woman. Allen, thus symbolically situates Spider Woman as the originator and architect of Ephanie's narrative.

The Laguna lores re-connect Ephanie to her Pueblo past, while opening up the possibilities for the liminal space she inhabits both as half breed and lesbian.

All the stories formed those patterns, laid down long before time so far. The One was the unity, the source, Shipap, where Naïya Iyatiku lived. The two was the first splitting of the one, the sign of the twins, the double - woman, the clan - mother generation. From whom came all the forms of spirit and matter as they appear on the earth and in earth's heavens. The forms of flame. The dark flame The gold flame The flame of white The grandmother flame. The sister flame The flame of the sun The fire of flint The fire of corn. The fire of passion, of desire. The flame of vision, of dream (WOS. 208).

Ephanie's movement from derangement to creation is punctuated by remembering/re-membering. By making connections with the past and tracing patterns in ancient stories, Ephanie is able to recognise those patterns in her own life. Ephanie is at once Thought Woman, the Woman who falls from the sky, and Kochinnenako, her mythic predecessors in Laguna / Keres Oral tradition:

She understood at last that everything was connected. Everything was related. Nothing came in that did not go out. Nothing was that did not live nestled within everything else. And this was how the stories went. What they had been for....Everything was told. What happened in time immemorial, as the old ones called that time before time, happened now. Only the names were different" (WOS 191)

Ephanie's realization is echoed by Silko, too, in Ceremony, through the words of Tayo's grandmother "It seems like I already heard these stories before. Only thing is, the names sound different" (C 260)
In *Ceremony*, the Laguna oral narratives in verse supplement/complement Tayo's narrative in prose. Tayo's healing is affected through memorizing the stories from their proper perspective. TS'eh, Tayo's lover, the Spider Woman's emanation, who helps Tayo in his healing process by bringing about his encounter with the feminine in him, tells Tayo "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 231) Edith Swan significantly points out here that "the story is there within him all the time, but it needs to be drawn out, remembered so to speak from the vantage point of a retrospective view." (Swan 1991 4 2) Memory enables Tayo to connect to the Spider woman's web and trace the nuances of all the filaments from the proper perspective.

Tayo's mental landscape reflects the Laguna landscape stricken by drought, and his healing ritual is punctuated by the stories of recovery of rain clouds in the verse in Silko's text. Tayo attributes the drought to his cursing the rain the day his cousin Rocky dies in the Phillipine jungles during the War. Tayo blamed the rain for Rocky's death:

He damned the rain until the words were a chant, and he sang it while he crawled through the mud to find the corporal and get him up before the Japanese saw them. He wanted the words to make a cloudless blue sky, pale with a summer sun pressing across wide and empty horizons. The words gathered inside him and gave him strength all the time he could hear his own voice praying against the rain (C 12).

The Laguna Pueblo stories of Humming Bird and the fly recovering the rain clouds; the disappearance of rain caused by the quarrel between the two sisters, Corn Woman and Reed Woman, the recovery of the rain clouds from Kaup'a'ta or the Gambler by the Sun Man with the help of the Spider grandmother-lend a mythic pattern to drought, the healing of the Tayo and the land and the occurrence of rainfall.
The Pueblo Indians believe that war and destruction and the denial of purification rites like the Scalp Ceremony to the victims of the war, causes drought. Allen explicates this Laguna belief:

War is so distasteful to them that they long ago devised ritual institutions to deal with antagonism between persons and groups such as medicine societies. They also developed rituals to purify those who had participated in the warfare. If a person had actually killed someone, the ritual purification was doubly imperative, for without it a sickness would come among the people and would infect the land and the animals and prevent rainfall (Allen 1992: 129).

This sickness brought about by war and witchery is apparent in Tayo's War Veteran friends Emo, Harley, Leroy, Pinky and others. The aridity of Tayo's mental landscape is connected to the drought-stricken Pueblo lands brought about, according to the Laguna belief, by the War and the lack of purification rites².

The way
I heard it
was
in the old days
they had this
Scalp society
for warriors
who killed
or touched
dead enemies
They had things
they must do
otherwise

² Edith Swan, quoting Boas, elucidates this "Laguna warriors joined the Scalp society, or 'Opi', after they had slain or touched the enemy and taken the scalp, the same Scalp Society Silko poetically represents in Ceremony. This group performs the Scalp Ceremony or the War dance which was held to welcome, cleanse and celebrate the return of the courageous victors (Swan 1991: 149)
K’ oo’ko would haunt their dreams
with her great fangs and
everything would be endangered
May be the rain wouldn’t come
or the deer would go away (C 37)

The Laguna belief in K’oo’ko, the giantess “said to feed on the exploits of the warriors” is elucidated by Swan “it is the Scalp Ceremony which K’u’oosh conducts for the returning Laguna war veterans” “lay to rest the Japanese souls in the green humid jungles, and it satisfied the female giant who fed on the dreams of the warriors” (Swan 19991 49). Tayo in his healing ceremony has to undergo the rituals of the Scalp Ceremony, enacting the roles of various katchinas

Paula Gunn Allen elucidates the importance of rituals in understanding the relationships that occur between the human and non human worlds, in the tribal world view

They believe that all are linked within one vast, living sphere, and that the linkage is not material but spiritual, and that its essence is the power that enables magical things to happen. Among these magical things are transformations of objects from one form to another, by teleportation, the curing of the sick (and conversely creating sickness in people), communication with animals, plants, and non-physical beings (spirits, katchinas, goddesses and gods), the compelling of the will of another, and the stealing or storing of souls. Mythical accounts from number of sources illustrate the variety of forms the uses ritual power can take (Allen 1992. 22-23).

The use of ritual power in healing is best illustrated by the use of Bear Cure Ceremony by Betonie in Tayo’s healing process. Allen defines ritual as a procedure whose purpose is
to transform some one or something from one condition or state to another (Allen 1992 79-80).

Allen further explicates the connection of the rituals to the tribal universe

“They perceive the Universe not as blind or mechanical, but as aware and organic. Thus ritual-organized activity that strives to manipulate or direct non-material energies toward some larger goal-forms the foundation of tribal culture. It is also the base of cultural artifacts such as crafts, hunting, architecture, art, music and literature. Literature which includes ceremony, myth, tale, and song, is the primary mode of the ritual tradition (Allen 1992 80)

Allen also points out that the tribal rituals necessarily include a “verbal element”, and contemporary novelists like Allen herself, Silko, and others, “draw from that verbal aspect in their work”(Allen 1992 80)

Silko links the drought that affects the land in Tayo’s narrative to Laguna beliefs and Tayo’s own cultural alienation resultant of the war. Swan’s reading is significant here.

“Tayo’s universe is founded on a “world made of stories” Consequently, he construes his words as causing the drought afflicting his people and their environment. His illness is cultural. It reflects that deprivation bought on by voicing his destructive thoughts, making him in part responsible for his state of alienation. Also it echoes his disorientation from tribal modes of thought coded in Spider Woman’s universal geometry (Swan 1991 45)

Ephanie, Allen’s protagonist too, realizes her deviation from the landscape of the Spider Woman. Her disorientation is affected by her sense of incompleteness as a half-breed and the internalized oppression to which she becomes a victim, first through Stephen, her Indian lover, and later through Thomas Yoshuri, a Japanese American whom she marries.
Ephanie's refusal to hold on to her dream attains narrative significance in the light of Allen's explication of the connection of the dreams to Shipap or origin place, the abode of the Spider Woman:

Dream connections play an important place in the ritual life of the Pueblos, as of the other tribes of the Americas. As the frightening katsina, K'oo' ko, can haunt the dreams of the uncleansed warriors and thus endanger everything, the power that moves the material and non-material world often does so in dreams. The place where certain dreams or ceremonies occur is believed to be in time immemorial (Allen 1992a).

Tayo tries to remember and relate through dreams to the time immemorial stories told to him by his grandmother and Uncle Josiah. In order to heal himself, he has to remember the stories from the proper perspective. Edith Swan points out that "in this process Tayo has to become a hero, like his cousin Rocky (Swan 1991:45). But first he has to perform the Bear Cure Ceremony under the guidance of the Navajo half-breed medicine man Betonie."

Silko, in Betonie's cure for Tayo, uses the Navajo sand painting ritual. Betonie uses the sand painting in his cure for Tayo: "The story, the myth of the Bear people, which Betonie tells as Harvey notes, is a part of the cure for Tayo".

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3 The Scalp Ceremony Ku'oo'sh performs for Tayo is ineffectual in curing him, because the old medicine is unable to comprehend "the white warfare-killing across great distances without knowing who or how many had died" (C 36), making it thus impossible to count the scalps and conduct the purification rites in the old way Ku'oo'sh sends Tayo, to the Navajo medicine man Betonie who makes changes in the ceremonies without altering their ritual pattern and hence is able to devise a cure for Tayo.

4 Valery Harvey stresses the importance of sand painting as a ritual in the Navajo culture. "Within Navajo Indian culture, sand painting or dry painting is an involved Ceremonial ritual mainly used for healing purposes. An integral part of the Navajo religious tradition, a sand painting is created out of natural elements by a tribal medicine man with the intended purpose of restoring the spiritual, emotional, physical and psychological health of an individual." (Harvey 1993:256)
The myth is of a man bewitched by coyote and how his mother-in-law and grandfather take him to the summit of the Dark Mountain to see the four old bear people who have the power to restore the mind. The bear people heal the bewitched man by preparing four hoops, four bundles of weeds and a white-corn sand painting. Betonie takes Tayo to the secluded area of a mountain summit and seats him in the center of the sand painting treated with prayer sticks, and hoops, while Betonie's helper imitates a bear. After the ceremony is completed, Tayo begins his recovery and starts his healing process (Harvey 1993: 257).

Tayo's healing ceremony is not complete with the sand painting ritual. Tayo has to ritually enact the ceremony through his encounter with "the stars", "the spotted cattle," "a mountain" and "a woman". Betonie, the medicine man anticipates for Tayo in his vision. Allen elucidates this.

Tayo's illness is a result of separation from the ancient unity of person, ceremony, and land, and his healing is a result of his recognition of this unity... The healing of Tayo and the land results from the reunification of the land and person. Tayo is healed when he understands, in magical (mystical) and loving ways, that his being is within and outside him, that includes his mother, Night Swan, TS'eh, Josiah, the spotted cattle, winter, hope, love and the starry universe of Betonie's Ceremony. This understanding occurs as Tayo lives the stories - those ancient and those new" (Allen 1992: 119 120).

**Trickster/Culture Hero and Ritual/Narrative Tradition:**

The trickster/culture hero is a common figure signifying the presence of Oral tradition in contemporary Native narratives. Edith Swan traces Tayo's antecedence in Silko's narrative to the Culture Hero, Tayo, in the Pueblo Oral tradition.

Another model of the male individuation process appears in stories providing a behavioral code embedded in the lore of a society nourished by an Oral tradition.
This mythic description of masculinity is crucial as a prototype because Tayo, hero of the novel, is congruent with a traditional folk lore hero (Swan 1991:15)

Tayo, like Nanapush in *Tracks*, is thus identified as a Culture Hero, a trickster figure

In Silko’s novel, the protagonist Tayo follows the mythic pattern set by his predecessor in the Laguna lore:

His story tells of being taken to the sky by his pet eagle, and in flight he sings and the people see him. They go to the mountain at the zenith in the upper world where he goes northward down to the home of the Spider Woman, then hunts with her grand sons snaring robins to procure a gift for her. He stays for a while” (Swan 1991 116)

Silko’s protagonist too, soars for a while with the American flag with the eagle insignia attached to it during the World War as Swan points out. The myth is inverted to suit the context of Silko’s contemporary Laguna text. Tayo, Silko’s protagonist follows the mythic pattern. Tayo’s journey to the north, according to Betonie’s instructions, leads him to the Mount TS’epina, TS’eh, the woman who becomes his lover, to the mountain lion and the hunter, to his Uncle Josiah’s spotted cattle and finally to the Spider Woman herself, whose cosmology he inhabits, the world of the Laguna Pueblo reservation.

Erdrich’s trickster/narrator Nanapush, on the other hand, is modelled on the Chippewa culture hero ‘Nanabozho and the events in Nanapush’s narrative parallel those in the life of the Winnebago trickster in the Ojibwe/Chippewa creation stories. Nanapush is aware of his significance in Erdrich’s narrative, and his relation to the culture hero is significantly expressed through his name “My father said, Nanapush. That’s what you’ll be called. Because it has got to do with trickery and living in the bush. Because it has to do with something a girl can’t resist. The first Nanapush stole the fire. You’ll steal hearts” (T.33) Nanapush’s role in ensuring the survival of his tribe, of creating a comfortable world for the Indians to live, in the face of hostile whites and adverse
circumstances, is anticipated through the trickster/creator Nanabozho/Nanapush in the Chippewa Oral tradition

William Bright in *The Natural History of Old Man Coyote* (1987) elucidates the archetypal trickster hero in the American Indian Oral traditions. The Trickster is, then many things. Like humanity, he is an omnivorous, ubiquitous, inhabitant of the North American biosphere, responsible for the world as we know it, yet a persistent bungler and dupe, and he is now, for many whites as well as for Indians a powerful symbol of a viewpoint that looks beyond abstractions and beyond technology to the ultimate value of survival (Bright 1987: 346).

Nanapush survives, like his predecessor in Chippewa lore, most adverse circumstances in life. He is the sole survivor from his family and clan which gets wiped out by the “disease” “that claimed all of the Anishinaabe that the earth could hold and bury”, the disease called “consumption” (T:1). Earlier he had survived “the spotted sickness from the south”, “(our) long flight west to the Nadoussioux land where we signed the treaty”, and “then a wind from the east bringing exile in a storm of government papers” (T1).

Bright’s enunciation of the cultural role of the trickster/transformer is significant here.

The trickster steals fire and salmon for the benefit of the humans, lays down cultural roles for men and women, and even ordains death, but is at the same time a prankster who is grossly erotic, insatiably hungry, inordinately vain, deceitful and cunning and a blunderer who is often the victim of his own tricks. In most traditions, he does not act as original creator, rather he changes things into the form they have retained ever since - “he is the creator of the world - as it is” (Bright 1987: 349).
The Adventures of Nanapush: Ojibway Indian Stories (1979) compiled by Emerson and David Coatsworth deals with the life and adventures of the trickster/creator Nanapush in Chippewa tradition. Nanapush the magician, creates the present world Indians inhabit by killing the serpent people who are his enemies, with the help of the muskrat who dives deep down the waters and brings him mud, out of which he fashions the globe.

Thus it was that the little ball grew and grew. At last, when the moose, the largest of all animals—had climbed onto it and disappeared from sight, Nanapush commanded the globe to stop growing. He himself stepped on it and said, 'Here is the new world - a home for all the birds and animals'. (Emerson and Coatsworth 1979. 7)

Nanapush, in Erdrich's Tracks, is an old man who has survived the destruction of his tribal world and its ethos brought about by the onslaught of white papers - Christianity and the printed words of colonial histories/narratives. Margie Towery remarks: “Nanapush, the first born in the sense that he is the oldest narrator, is also the first born in the sense that he is the first narrator. He evokes a personality that includes humor, sometimes gentle, sometimes lewd.” (Towery 1992. 104). Nanapush tries to create a new world for the Indians, his ability to adapt himself to the new circumstances is reminiscent of his trickster nature. Naney J. Paterson points out:

Nanapush’s ability to adapt to these new conditions comes in part from his traditional namesake, the Chippewa trickster Naanabozho. In fact, the episodes in the story of Naanabozho parallel the episodes in Nanapush’s story. Both share the ability to come back to life after death or near death, both are noted for their keen ability to track people, both avenge wrongs committed on family members, both are powerful story tellers (Paterson 1994: 990).
In fact, Erdrich emphasizes the last part, the role of Nanapush as (hi-)story narrator/teller. Nanapush’s power is evident in his ability to create narrative, to delegitimate, to disseminate, while at the same time, elude from it.

Nanapush’s refusal to divulge his name to Father Damien for the church records is significant. He tells Lulu

My girl, listen well, Nanapush is a name that loses power everytime that it is written and stored in a government file. That’s why I only gave it once in all those years.

‘No name, I told Father Damien when he came to take the church census. No name. I told the Agent when he made up the tribal roll.

“I have the use of a white man’s name”. I told the captain who delivered the ration payout for our first treaty, “but I won’t sign your paper with that name either” (T 33).

In his refusal to give his name to the white records, Nanapush resists his fixation in narrative and the colonial demand for the narrative. Gerald Vizenor remarks on the role of the trickster in Native narratives.

The trickster and comic liberator craves chance in agonistic imagination to lessen the power of social science and bourgeois humanism. .. the comic liberator is a healer in linguistic games, chance, and postmodern imagination; the trickster as a semiotic sign denies presence and completion “that romantic vital essence” in tribal representations and the instrumental language of social science (cited in Velie 1991. 131).

Alan Velie notes that in Vizenor’s view, the trickster is, “a culturally centered, communally created, highly complex comic figure who cannot be isolated from or understood outside the context of his discourse” (Velie 1993. 131). Nanapush, in his role as Erdrich’s narrator, has to be understood from oral tradition perspective, and he cannot
be isolated and fixed in narratives. Nanapush “patterns himself on the trickster hero of his tribe’s mythology, doing his best with what magic and wit he can muster to lead the people through a hostile country.” (Velie 1993: 133) As a trickster/narrator, Nanapush, “is a communal sign, never in isolation; a concordance of narrative voices. (Vizenor 1993 12) as his narrative indicates. He is not, as Vizenor notes, “tragic”, because “the narrative does not promise a happy ending. (Vizenor 1993 12). Like his mythic predecessor, he is noted for his ribald humour and his amorous pursuits Towery points out instances of Nanapush’s humour in Erdrich’s text

When Pauline/Leopolda has limited herself to urinating only thrice a day, Nanapush tells a ribald story, fills her with tea, and tricks her into using the out house before she is “supposed to”. In a gentler, self-deprecating vein, after he invites an unresponsible Eli to share a meal with him, Nanapush thinks, “I suppose he could see for himself that the meat in the pot was only one poor gopher that should have hibernated while it could” (Towery 1992: 104).

Nanapush is a medicine man too. He advises Eli Kashpaw on how to pursue Fleur He has the power as Towery points out, “to heal Lulu’s frozen feet even though the white doctor says they must be amputated” (Towery 1992: 106) His narration of his own amorous exploits is similar to that of the Chippewa trickster Nanabozho⁵. Nanapush’s sexual prowess is related to his power with words, through which he is able to heal himself and others:

Our talk floated upward in the darkness, swirled around the past and the present. I knew the breaths and nights we had left were numbered, but I was too weak to make any hay I said to her, “May be, I’m ruined for it after all”

Margaret laughed though

“As long as your voice works the other will” (T 129)

⁵ Nanapush narrates to Eli how he managed to satisfy three wives and advises him on the methods to win Fleur’s love; even though an old man at the time of narration, he manages to persuade Eli’s mother, Margaret Kashpaw, to become his wife, by his lewd jokes and sexual innuendoes
The power with words, the ability to voice, to create the narrative, is the ultimate triumph of the trickster hero’s magical prowess. Nanapush tells Lulu

Talk is an old man’s last vice. I opened my mouth and wore out the boy’s ears, but then that is not my fault. I shouldn’t have been caused to live so long, shown so much of death, had to squeeze as many stories into the corners of my brain. They are all attached and once I started there is no end to telling because they’re hooked from one side to the other, mouth to tail. During the year of sickness, when I was the last one left, I saved myself by starting a story. I got well by talking. Death could not get a word in edgewise, grew discouraged, and travelled on (T 46).

Nanapush’s humour and ability to laugh at the adversity adds a lot to his survival instinct. Gerald Vizenor significantly points out

“The comic rites are necessarily impious”, muses Wylie Sypher, “for comedy is sacrilege as well as release...”. We find ourselves reflected in the comedian who satisfies our need for impieties. Sypher maintains that “the high comic vision of life is humane, an achievement of man as a social being”, which would include trickster narratives, comic holotropes and concordance in discourse... The trickster, then is a comic and communal sign, a discourse in a narrative with no hope or tragic promises” (Vizenor 1993:13)

Nanapush’s impieties evoke laughter even with the awareness that the circumstances are bleak and the solutions don’t come easy.

Nanapush, as trickster, is a bricoleur too. Bright substantiates Ramsey’s view that the trickster is a bricoleur”, “the handy man or fixer - upper, who cannot stop himself from tampering with original creation and thus produces the world which we humans know now - imperfect, but ours”. (Bright 1987:349) In Barre Tolken’s phrase, the trickster is “the exponent of all possibilities”. (cited in Bright 1987:319). It is in this sense, that both Nanapush, the tribal elder/narrator in Tracks and Tayo, the half-breed
protagonist in *Ceremony* become culture heroes; their roles in their tribal communities and in the contemporary narratives of Erdrich and Silko respectively are reminiscent of the culture hero/trickster and his life patterns in the Oral tradition. Both Tayo and Nanapush show the tenacity to survive the colonial onslaught, destruction brought by white papers and wars, and their presence as the voice of tradition in these writer's texts indicate the survival and continuance of the tribal history and worldview as Orality. Ephanie in *The Woman who Owned the Shadows*, too, shows the trickster qualities in her ability to adapt and survive. Though her narrative lineage cannot be traced to any specific trickster, her role/life is reminiscent of the Woman who falls from the Sky in Pueblo Oral tradition.

Erdrich's text begins and ends with Nanapush's narrative indicating the significance of the Oral tradition. *Ceremony* too, begins and ends with in the thought of the Spider Woman Grandmother and the story of witchery in verse is laid to rest with Tayo's return to the community after his successful encounter with witchery, to tell the story to the priests and the elders of the Pueblo community. Allen's narrative begins with the Navojo song signifying the recognition of Ephanie's loneliness and ends with her realization of her belonging with the other women of the Pueblo world, with her entering the Pueblo world/Song/Spider Woman's gynecentric web.

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I am Walking          Alive
Where I am            Beautiful
I am still            Alive
In Beauty             Walking
I am                 Entering
Not alone
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(WOS:213)

Paula Gunn Allen notes that *Ceremony* and *The Woman who Owned the Shadows* "reflect the complementary traditions of women and men, which have been
separate, but interdependent in ritual traditions\(^6\)” (Allen 1992: 82) Ephanie, Allen’s protagonist, follows the Laguna woman’s tradition which emphasizes her continuity as a link in the Laguna ritual life. Allen herself makes this clear:

My own novel, *The Woman Who Own The Shadows* (1983), looks specifically to the woman’s traditions for its ritual foundations. As already mentioned women’s rituals are centered on continuance. While women experience transformation accompanied by danger, blood, and death, they also create life from their own flesh. The transformative phases of a woman’s life alter the degree of power (in the medicine or sacred sense) that she possesses bringing to her increased power with each of the four female life phases. Ephanie’s search for psychic unity is founded in ritual awareness which, in turn, is embedded within the adaptive and inclusive properties of the oral tradition as well as the ritual of her Guadalupe people (Allen 1992: 98-100).

Tayo in *Ceremony*, on the other hand, follows the man’s traditions emphasizing change. The Navajo medicine man Betonie tells Tayo; “things which don’t shift and grow are dead things” (C 126); change and adaptability as emphasized through the trickster figure are necessary to endure in an ever changing world. Nanapush in *Tracks* recognizes this as he decides to wield the power of the pen and ink to counter the war with white papers which causes the tribe’s extermination.

Paula Gunn Allen notes that “the most important theme in Native American novels is not conflict and devastation, but transformation and continuance”.

We change, of course which is one very important meaning of men’s ritual traditions, and of course, we remain the same, which is one meaning of women’s ritual traditions. When seen together, the significance of the ritual, ceremonial traditions of the tribes becomes clear. The nature of the cosmos, of the human, and

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\(^6\) “Every part of the oral tradition expresses the idea that ritual is gender-based, but rather than acting as a purely divisive structure, the separation by gender emphasizes the complementarity. The women’s traditions are largely about continuity and the men’s traditions are largely about transitoriness or change” (Allen 1992: 82)
the creaturely, and the supernatural universe is like water. It takes numerous forms; it evaporates and it gathers. Survival and continuance are contingent on its presence. Whether it is in a cup, a jar or an underground river, it nourishes life. And whether ritual traditions are in ceremony, myth, or novel, they nourish the people. They give meaning. They give life (Allen 1992:101).

In the texts analyzed above, the Oral tradition as a presence weaves the contemporary narratives, plays a major role in the evolution of characters and plot structure. It is present in the creation myths and origin stories, in the grandmother/grandfather figure who patterns the web of the Indian community life and voices the Native world views and stories. In the American texts, the Oral tradition is a concrete presence as creation myths and tribal lores.

**Tradition as Presence/Voice in Canadian Texts:**

The Canadian Native women too, evoke tradition to lend meaning to their narratives. Tradition is voiced through the narrative structure and the tribal world view echoed by the characters. The grandmother figure, though a significant presence, in tracing the lineage of these writers, is not, however posited in any specific Oral tradition. There are no overt references to creation myths or origin stories as in the case of the American texts, but a subtle emphasis on the Oral tradition as the source of past/memory/story. This is a significant difference in that the Canadian writers, Maracle and Culleton are Metis brought up in settler communities divorced from the tribal reservations. Armstrong, on the other hand, is an Okanagan writer brought in the reservation with emphasis of tribal values.

Ryga in the “Preface” to Armstrong’s *Slash*, notes that the colonizer attempted to eliminate the Oral traditions of the people. “Often using religion and alcohol as mind altering drugs, the preserved history and traditions of the original peoples were ruthlessly eliminated from memory or turned into objects of scorn and humiliation” (Ryga 1984:10) In the light of the colonial situation and its systemic oppressions, the role of the grandmother as the source of the tradition/history becomes highly significant. Jeanette Armstrong in her poem *From the Landscape of Grandmother* (1991) emphasizes
the role of the grandmother figure as tradition in shaping and transforming the contemporary texts:

voices of continuance
countless sound shapings which roll thunderous
over millions of tongues
to reach me
alive with meaning
a fertile ground
from which generations spring
out of the landscape of grandmother
the sharing
in what we select
to remember

(Cited in Kelly 1991: 112)

Lee Maracle, too, recognizes the thread of continuity contemporary Native women trace through the grandmothers in their lives/narratives:

I know nothing
of great mysteries
know less of creation
I know that the further backward
in time that I travel
the more grandmothers
and the further forward
the more grand children
I am obligated to both. (IAW 8-9)
Maracle is obligated to her grandmothers for empowering her with narrative and her grandchildren for making her life/narrative meaningful. Maracle in *I Am Woman* traces her lineage as (hi)story teller from the numerous grandmothers and Native women who have whaltzed in and out of her life.

To the family of the grandmother that I removed from the pages of history to combine with the teaching of another family’s grandmother who insisted that I too call her grand mother, I apologize. The grandmother in this book, like Rusty, is a composite of a number of Native women I have known. Their lives, likewise are a composite of the reality of our history and present existence. Their feelings about life are my own. Their teachings are ancient and as closely accounted for as I can remember” (IAW: 5).

The grandmothers in Maracle’s book do not have a mythic origin in creation stories as in Silko’s or Allen’s narrative, as the creator figures, but are originated from old Native women Maracle herself has known in her life or come across in history books. The absence of a mythic grandmother as creator/originator indicates the author’s severed traditional roots. In the texts by the Canadian Native women, the grandfather/grandmother figure is present as a character in the fictional narrative, not as the Mother Creator or Culture Hero as in the Native American text. Though tradition is posited as history in the Canadian Native women’s narratives analysed here, there are no overt references to myths or origin stories.

Maracle acknowledges the contribution of the grandmothers in evolving her own narratives. “In the warmth of her kitchen the soft tones of her voice touched my ears and gentled any raucous spirit. I had learned not to query uselessly before I learned to speak. This day I mentioned all my great grandmothers and how I would like to see them. She did not give me their presence, instead she gave me her story” (IAW: 84). With the help of the grandmother’s stories, Maracle attempts to fashion her own narrative: “I am not sure what to do with that (stories) except that I shall try to grasp the
essence of our lives and help to weave a new story. A story in which pain is not our way of life” (IAW:4).

The grandmother in Maracle’s text is a conglomeration of voices/presences that merge into Maracle’s autobiographical/authorial voice. Their stories are Maracle’s legacy and the process of her decolonization involve remembering/re-membering the stories. “Spirituality is reconnection with the self and our ancestry. It is doing the right thing for your family and your community”, (IAW: 176); doing the right thing obviously involves transmitting the voice/stories of the grandmother. The grandmother figures represent Metis women in the various stages of the history of colonization-Rusty, the grandmothers whose stories Maracle listens to around the kitchen fires in the fifties and sixties, and the Indian woman\footnote{Before Rusty and Alexander St, Skidrow and my children there was my grandmother On the shore by the lakes and in the hills of our heritage, Our grannées sat on dead wood logs behind the black robes and their fathers (IAW 91)} who “sat on the dead wood logs” listening to the voice of civilizing mission represented through the black robes in its encounter with the Native tribal world view voiced by/through her father, initiating the production of hybridity.

The conglomeration of interpolative voices in Maracle’s narrative implies the presence of Oral tradition where story telling is a collective/communal activity. Maracle’s text consists of stories of various Native women which craft Maracle’s narrative voice-photographs, poems, interruptions by Cj and Dennis Maracle and so on-emphasizing the Metis Orality. Though Maracle, unlike Silko, Erdrich or Allen makes no claims to a particular oral tradition in her narrative, Native/Metis Orality is a pervasive presence in her text. The past, the present and the future are evoked as the thread of continuity of Metis existence. Dennis Maracle significantly points out in the “Preface”: “The voices and stories of our grandmothers, the dispossessed, the lost and the confused,
the dead rebels, the hopeful energetic youth channelized through the pen of one recently de-colonized woman” (Maracle 1988: x)

Jeanette Armstrong too in her text evokes the Okanagan Oral tradition and the tribal/communal aesthetics in her narrative/history in Slash. The Okanagan tribal aesthetics and communal identity is apparent in Armstrong’s text, in which Slash’s identity, like Maracle’s in I Am Woman is shaped out of his conversations and encounters with numerous Native people.

The narrative structure of Slash is patterned on the traditional Okanagan stories, as Harmutz Lutz points out (Lutz 1991 15) Slash’s narrative, like the ritual and ceremonial Okanagan narratives, is divided into six parts: the four chapters signifying as in The Woman Who Owned the Shadows, the four cardinal directions, with the Prologue and Epilogue marking the directions above and below. Armstrong’s text is marked by its Orality—the voices that cohere in Slash’s narrative voice. Armstrong often omits the physical details of her characters, their appearance and age, thus conveying a sense of communal story telling where all these details are irrelevant, as they are inherently understood by the very presence of the characters in the act of story/narrative telling. Armstrong herself elucidates this.

Characters are presented in quite a unique way as part of an ongoing or larger tribal group. So there’s not much focus on the individual in the Western bourgeois individualistic sense. And, also, since they are part of a larger web, other characters move around, characters come in from the outside. They may be not even introduced, they just have a name and then there’s a conversation with somebody else... it’s difficult for us to look at things in a separate way. Everything is part of something else. Everything is part of a continuum of other things, a whole. There’s a whole bigger picture there, that things are always a part of. The characters I presented are parts of that whole” (cited in Lutz 1991: 15-16).
It is significant to note here, that even after reading the novel, the reader is still left to wonder about the physical appearance of the major characters - Slash, Mardi, Maeg, Jimmy, Uncle Joe, Pops and so on. The characters are highlighted according to their roles in the community and as Armstrong herself acknowledges, this strategy is "intentional". On the other hand, Pra-cwa emerges much more vividly, consequent of his role and power as the leader of the tribe. Armstrong portrays Pra-cwa as a powerful leader whose physical impact derived from his spiritual strength would be clear to all the people around the fire engaged in the act of story/narrative telling.

The Native world view is voiced through characters like Uncle Joe, Pra-cwa, Slash’s father, the Plains Indian medicine man, Maeg’s mother, tribal elders, whose views later Slash himself expounds, as well as through the delineation of character/physical traits in Armstrong’s text. The elders live by the tribal laws, shaped out by the tribal world view: “The law don’t mean anything on paper. It’s what’s in your head that is the real law. If you learn good things and think good things, no paper laws are needed for you. That’s how we believe” (S:21). Slash’s father’s words, cited here, echo the voice of the traditional Okanagan view/wisdom reiterated throughout the novel through Pra-cwa, Uncle Joe, the Plains Indian Medicine man, Maeg’s mother and Slash’s cousin Chuck.

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8 I don’t know if you have a clear picture of what Joe looks like. You shouldn’t have. The part about Joe that should be coming clear is his mind and his ability as a spiritual medicine man to work with. So, you never really know if he’s tall or short or clean - but or whatever - and that’s intentional, the part of him that is important for the story is his spiritual leadership and knowledge (cited in Lutz, 1991:16).

9 You can see what he looks like. He has a moustache and he has greying hair - and his brilliant eyes and the intensity of his character, and his personality, and the intensity of the words he uses. The character Pra-cwa is a person who played a part in which people related to him as an individual, and as a person, because of the strength of his leadership. What they responded to was that personality, the charisma of the person, and the physical appearance is part of that. So that part is important to bring into the characterization” (Armstrong, cited in Lutz, 1991:10-17).
Tradition rules perception on various issues like white schooling system and opening the lands for development. Pra-cwa points out “Ever since those young people went to school away from home, they are changed. They don’t like our ways... They are ashamed of everything Indian. That’s why they take stuff like Band Houses and other things, like leasing their land for money to white people” (S.26). Similarly, Pra-cwa is vocal about the issue of Okanagan independence as apparent in his views on voting for the Canadian government “Why should we want to do that? We wouldn’t want them to come and vote for who was going to be our chief. We live different from them and they live different from us” (S 18). It takes Slash a long time, however, to figure out this difference.

In Armstrong’s text, as in the case of Erdrich’s Tracks, tradition is voiced through the grandfather figures. Jennifer Kelly points out “The native male protagonist in Jeanette Armstrong’s Slash is empowered by a male elder, a grandfather figure whose power is not defined as exclusively male. The elder’s teachings are not gender specific, but communal” (Kelly 1991:117). The androgynous tribal identity of the grandfather figures is emphasized by Armstrong as Erdrich does in the case of Nanapush in Tracks. Both Erdrich and Armstrong have chosen grandfathers as the empowering agency rather than grandmothers, in order to resist the stereotyping and fixation of their texts in academic/critical discourses, based on white gynecentric norms.

The evolution of Slash’s androgynous tribal self through his encounter with the tribal elders and two women Mardi and Marg and his return to the community to tell the story parallels Tayo’s alienation, healing ritual, his ceremonial encounters with the feminine, ritually enacted through Night Swan and TS’eh and his return to the web of Spider Woman’s thought, the world of his Pueblo community. The difference, however, is that while Armstrong only refers to the ritual pattern, in Silko’s text, this pattern is ritually enacted by the protagonist.
Armstrong elucidates the presence of Oral tradition as a presence/voice in the Native women's texts and the purpose it accomplishes.

I wanted to give to my grand children what I felt, and what others felt through that time. I wanted to give it to them from our perspective, as truthfully as I could. And I know that the Oral tradition will carry some parts of that, pieces of that, and various experiences of our people, because, we are an Oral tradition people, and that continues. Anywhere you sit at our tables, you’ll hear pieces and parts of that all the time. It comes up all the time. People are talking about it and relating those stories, just as I heard the stories from my aunts, and uncles, and grand parents, and elders in my community (cited in Lutz 1991:15).

Armstrong, however, like Nanapush in Erdrich in Tracks, acknowledges the importance of the written word “those oral traditions reach a certain number of people in our community, where as a written piece like the novel can reach further than that” (Lutz 1991:15). This recognition functions behind the evolution of orality in the written texts of Native Women writers.

In Beatrice Culleton’s April Raintree, a semi-autobiographical narrative dealing with the lives of two Metis sisters, April and Cheryl, tradition as a presence/voice is evoked in a very different manner from the texts analyzed above. Culleton, like her protagonist April, and her fellow Metis writer Maracle, was raised in settler community, divorced from her Metis roots, in foster homes and the absence of a specific Oral tradition or creation myths and lores testifies to this alienation as well as her Metissage.

Culleton’s text, in the narrative of April, the protagonist, and the interpolative narratives of her sister Cheryl, deals with April’s search for identity. April’s search is contrasted/complemented by that of Cheryl with the sisters’ identification with their white and Metis sides respectively accentuated by their skin colouring. April comes to terms with her Metis self after her rape and Cheryl’s suicide. April’s search for identity
and her reclamation of her Metis heritage and transformation is evoked through her encounter with the medicine woman, White Thunder bird Woman, at the Friendship Centre, she visits with Cheryl. Tradition is imparted as a silent eloquence to April through the old Native Woman: “The old woman suddenly reached towards me and put her hand on mine. I glanced down at her hand. It looked rusted and old. Her fingers were swollen at joints, disfigured. The veins stood out, and it took everything I had not to withdraw my hand from hers.” (ART 140) April's initial reaction of repulsion to her encounter with her Indian heritage, accentuated by the colonial prejudices she had internalized, however, gives way to something else, more profound.

Her hand felt so warm, so dry, so ancient I'm sure my smile froze and then faded. I waited for her to take her hand away. I looked at her questioningly but she didn't say anything. Her gaze held mine for I saw in her eyes that deep simple wisdom of which Cheryl had spoken. And I no longer found her touch distasteful. Without speaking a word to me, the woman imparted her message with her eyes. She had seen something in me that was special, something that was deserving of her respect. I wondered what she could possibly have found in me that could have warranted her respect. I stood there, humbled. At the same time, I had this overwhelming feeling that a mystical spiritual occurrence had just taken place (ART. 140).

Tradition is thus voiced through the silent presence of the Native woman, who as Cheryl later explains to April, is a powerful medicine woman, a tribal elder who recognizes April's significant role in helping her Metis community.

Jennifer Kelly reiterates Barbara Godard's view that “the mediation of silence in texts written in English may inform such a doubled movement"- (to the past and maintainence of tradition, and its questioning of that past and its mediation of tradition within a contemporary context and a dominant discursive form)“ in the reclamation and maintainence of Native cultural traditions” (Kelly 1991: 121). Kelly points out that
Barbara Godard reads silence in Native women’s writing as a discursive practice rather than as an oppressive absence, as “a radical strategy that embeds the performance aspect of an Oral literal tradition within a written text” (p.121). Kelly further cites Trinh T Minh-ha: “Silence is so commonly set in opposition with speech. Silence as a will not to say or a will to unsay and has a language of its own has barely been acknowledged” (cited in Kelly 1991 122). In *April Raintree*, Culleton explores the power of silence in voicing tradition “Silence is a language of loss and of survival, the grand daughter’s recognition of . . . the power of transformation is embedded in silence”. (Kelly 1991: 122). This power of tradition as a silent presence evocative of speech/voice is imparted to April by the tribal elder, White Thunder Bird Woman, and this encounter facilitates April’s recognition of her Native Communal Self.

**Homing In:**

William Bevis notes that the plots of the Indian novels emphasize the theme of “Homing in”. “The typical Indian plot, then, recoils from a white world in which the mobile Indian individual finds no meaning... and as if by instinct, comes home” (Bevis 1993: 28) and the plot of all the Native texts analyzed treats of this theme of homing in-return to the community with variations in the nuances of the alienation and return, contingent with the aspect which the author/writer emphasizes. In *Ceremony*, Tayo experiences alienation and disintegration of self due to his breed status and his experiences in the World War I, performs various ceremonies and rituals in his healing process and returns to the gynecentric world of Laguna Pueblo community to instruct the elders inside the Kiva. In *The Woman who Owned the Shadows*, Ephanie Atenacio too experiences alienation and fragmentation of self/identity before her remembering her role in the Laguna Pueblo Cosmogyny. In *Tracks*, the theme of Homing in is emphasized through Lulu to whom Nanapush narrates the story and whose return from the white school to listen to the voice of tradition/Nanapush is significant.
All the three Canadian Native texts, like their American counterparts, emphasize in their plot structure the "homing in" theme. Maracle remarks: "When my sickened spirit needed to be healed though, I sought the teachings of my grandmothers... as a last straw" (IAW: 43) This is precisely what Slash, the protagonist of Armstrong's text, does. Slash Kelasket goes through various phases in his life as an activist: drug addiction, alcoholism, imprisonment, violent political activism, before finding the ideal solution to the Indian problems in the ancient medicine ways of his Okanagan people. In *April Raintree*, April the protagonist, is alienated from her family and Metis community, brought up in the foster homes, emulating the white values, before her realization and affirmation of her Metis feminine self. April too suffers alienation, racism and violence through rape by the White men who mistake her for Cheryl, before she comes to terms with her Metis identity, before homing in. Paula Guna Allen significantly points out the tribal aesthetics behind the plot structure of these narratives:

Native writers write out of tribal traditions and into them. They work within a literary tradition that is at base connected to ritual and beyond that to tribal metaphysics or mysticism. What has been experienced over the ages mystically and communally-with individual experience, fitting in that over reaching pattern form the basics of tribal aesthetics (Allen 1989:5).

Tradition is thus evoked as past, history, myth, continuity, the thread from which the North American Native Women weave their lives/narratives. The grandmother/father figure posited as a narrative/discursive strategy is a site of identity construction for the Native Women Writers. Native women writers and their narratives trace their lineage, weave their lives into the communal/tribal websites by reclaiming the voices of the grandmother. The voice of tradition as the "landscape of grandmother" "empowers a range of multiple transitional subjectivities and hails the diverse voice of a rich matrilineal Native heritage, its shifting subjectivities enabling collective identification and marking individual difference" (Kelly 1991 113). Paula Gunn Allen significantly points out the role of Oral tradition as a mode of Native resistance in their narratives: