Leslie Marmon Silko is one of the key figures in American Indian literature. She is designated as a living cultural treasure by the State of New Mexico. She was born on March 5, 1948 in Albuquerque, New Mexico. She is a mixed blood, 1/12th Laguna Pueblo and Keres Indian, the rest of her ancestry being European American and Mexican American.

The speciality of Silko’s life is that she grew up on the edge of Pueblo society. Due to mixed blood her family’s house was at the edge of the reservation. Moreover, her family members were not allowed to participate in various rituals arranged by the traditional Pueblo society.

Despite of this, her grandmother and aunts educated her and nurtured her mind by telling traditional stories of Laguna people. She completed her school education from the Catholic school in Albuquerque and received B.A. degree from the University of New Mexico in 1969. She got married with John Silko in 1971; at present she is living as a divorcee and, a full time writer.

Silko’s mother tongue is Keresan, a language of Southwestern Pueblo Laguna people. She learnt a lot from this
language; later on she learnt English, and then started writing in it. Her writings are suffused with the landscape and traditions of the Southwestern Pueblos where her Laguna ancestors lived for centuries. She reflects frequently on both her American Indian background and her sense of herself as an individual. Her creative force acts on many borders like linguistics, cultural and social system. In this case what seems to be an extremely local and particular is the material that has been exploited by Silko for the purpose of creative writing. Local details and the special milieu plays vital role in her writing.

Silko began as a creative writer since her school days. Her first story, *The Man to Send Rain Clouds* was published in 1969 and it garnered a great deal of praise. She received a National Endowment Award the Humanities Discovery Grant. She wrote and published more stories and poems during the period 1968-1974, most of which are collected in her first book-*Laguna Women: Poems* (1974). In the year 1977 Silko published her first novel, *Ceremony*. The speciality of this novel is that it explains how story telling is vital in Native Americans and how white culture has made many attempts to destroy these stories as well as their ceremonies. The novel tells the story of protagonist, Tayo, a mixed-blood veteran returning from fighting against Japan in World War
II. While returning to the poverty-stricken reservation in Laguna, Tayo is recovering from shell-shock and is haunted with memories of his half-brother, who died in the conflict. Therefore, initially Tayo takes refuge in alcoholism. But it is useless. Later on he is helped by the mixed-blood Shaman Betonie, with various rituals and ceremonies; Tayo comes to understand the world and his own place within it. Here, one can understand the genuine problem of the Native Americans; they could not get any kind of medicine or the temporary refuge in the European value based social system. The ultimate solution for them is in the Native American world itself. Silko has weaved the traditional stories in a very skilful manner to give the total impact to the reader. So the ultimate quest of the Native American is to return to his original, ancestral world.

In 1981, Silko brought out her another book, *Storyteller*. In this book Silko gives an interlinked collection of poems and short stories. All the poems and stories are about her own family. Every piece has a personal touch and intimacy interlinked with each other. In 1986, *Delicacy and the Strength of Lace: Letters* was published. It is a kind of collected volume of her correspondence with her poet friend James Baldwin.

*Almanac of the Dead*, a massive volume is published in 1991. It is an ambitious work of Silko which has got mixed
response from the readers. In this book Silko deals with many issues related to the American Indians. The main theme of the book is the conflict between the Native Americans and the whites. The book has a darker tone than her other works. The situations and the characters are more complicated and describe the predicament of the American Indian present America. *Yellow Woman*, a book of stories is published in 1993. *Sacred Water Narratives and Pictures* was published in the same year.

Silko has published her *Yellow Woman and Beauty of Spirit* in 1996. In both the books that is in *Yellow Woman* and *Yellow Woman and Beauty of the Spirit*, Silko speaks about the Laguna society, the arrival of the Christian missionaries and makes strong political statement against the racist politics.

Her collection of poems, *Love Poem and Slim Man Canyon* was published in 1996. Her recent novel, *Garden in the Dunes* is published in 1999. In this novel the writer, Silko, weaves themes of women’s history, slavery and gardening.

Silko’s work is appreciated all over the world. Most of her works are translated into German, Italian, and Korean languages. She is the recipient of MaCarthur “genius” award. Despite of many more awards she has received for her writing, she has been counted as one of the 135th most important women writers in the
history of the world. Leslie Marmon Silko has carved her name in the American literature, because of her skill of drawing the oral traditions and folklore of her Pueblo heritage to enrich her fiction and poetry and ability to convey Native American values and experience. Although she recounts the abuses of Native Americans by white society, her work maintains an optimistic tone.

Native American novelist, poet, essayist and short story writer Leslie Mormon Silko was raised in Old Laguna, New Mexico. The Spaniards had founded a mission there early in the 18th century, but old Laguna had been formed their countries earlier by cattle-keeping Pueblo, successful repelling raids by the Navajos and the Apaches. Silko’s heritage is complicated; her great grandfather was Caucasian, while her mother was a mixed-blood Plains Indian, and she also has Mexican ancestors. Silko uses the heritage as a source of strength. For Silko, literature is an extension of an oral tradition based on the power of the words to maintain a sense of a Native American tribal and community culture. Although nostalgia and a sense of loss haunts her stories, they frequently end on an optimistic note for a better future where diverse ethnic groups have learned to respect each other’s unique lifestyles. There is strong moral connection between Silko’s artistic delight in crafting a story and the therapeutic function of
them. She hopes it will serve in the Native American community. In all her literary contribution, which also includes poems and photographs as well as short stories, she sketches realistically sympathetic people living in harmony with animals and with the forces of nature. In *Ceremony*, Leslie Silko brilliantly crosses racial styles of humour in order to cure the foolish delusions of the reader regarding superiority or inferiority complex.

Silko plays off affectionate Pueblo humour against the black humour so prominent in the 20th century white culture. This comic strategy has the end-result of opening our eyes to general foolishness, and also to the possibility of combining the merits of all races. Joseph Campbell wrote in *The Inner Reaches of Outer Space* of the change in mythologies away from the local and tribal toward a mythology that will arise from: “This unified earth as of one harmonious being.”¹ *Ceremony* is a work that changes local mythologies in the more inclusive spirit. Silko is the right person to have written this book. She herself is a mixed-blood and her experience has evidently given her access not only to a variety of problems, but also to a variety of styles of clowning and joking. Although Elaine Jahner has mentioned: “The presence of jokes in the novel, I have known whites to read *Ceremony* as not comical at
any point.”

Probably their power of recognition had been switched off by

the picture of humourless Indian... So common in so much of the literature, in so many of the film and television depiction of Native Americans.

Though *Ceremony* is serious, offering a number of valuable propositions for consideration, the narrative also spins a web of jokes in the morning sun. If reader’s cultural background has not prepared then for Pueblo reverence for the material spider, they could think of Silko’s writing as resembling to the turning and darting of a brown-and-white bird hunting insect in the air, at one moment flashing white sunlight, the next nearly invisible against the browns of this beautiful earth.

In the *Ceremony* Silko narrates that of a Navajo song, but one not sung exactly as it would have been done before whites arrived in New Mexico. It is neither sung by a pure-blood Indian, non sung on behalf of pure-blood Indian. As it is traditional, the *Ceremony* is to be completed after the song sung by the sick man, a Laguna named Tayo. His effort to finish the ceremony by correct action form the last half of the novel, just as first half was composed of the events which made him sick. The series of events, taken together, make it clear that what the veteran’s administration doctor has labelled battle fatigue is, in
Tayo’s case at least, really a struggle to make a decision about death. He tries two ways of responding to its invasion of his life that do not bring self erasure and killing an agent of death. Finally, he is able to find a way of opposing distinction which will not lead him to his erasure as a force on the reservation. He does not allow anyone to kill him, and most importantly, not to change him into an agent of death.

Tayo’s difficulty is grave; yet Silko’s jokes about him are very frequent. The belief among whites that Indians never laugh is contradicted continually by the sounds of Indians responding to subtle in-jokes or to be corrective kind of teasing, crystallized in the work of ritual clowns. *Black Elk* speaks of clowns appearing when people needed a good laugh. At that time, he says, the clowns base their performance on the minor frustrations of life or on our minor flaws as human beings, such as our tendency to exaggerate our plight. Anne Cameron, too, on *The Daughter of Copper Woman*, has written the dedication of a sacred clown:

> In this case, a female Salish or Cowichan clown, for the eradication of foolish behaviour and injustice, whether it is originated with Indians or whites.

It is to believe that Leslie Marmon Silko is in effect a sacred clown, turning the light of laughter against evils, which might otherwise weaken all. Most of the clowning in the *Ceremony* is not a
deliberate performance by the characters. Tayo, passive, weeping and vomiting, does not apparently experience any amusing dimension of his depression. The Penguin edition cover painting, “Unfinished Crow”, by Fitz Scholder, can be seen as a portrayal of the sad clown type, applies perfectly well to Tayo’s condition as the story unfolds.

Animals are also shown as clowns in this exhilarating book. The crossbreed cattle which take flight at every opportunity are eventually the death cause of Uncle Josiah. This sad outcome eventually turns into comic in the symbolic sense that although half-breed is the solution and also problems of a nation. They are not an easy solution, or again, that although Tayo correctly grieves over Josiah’s death, he is wrong to freeze the moments of that death. By way of ethical comment, animal clowns point up the ridiculous flight of Tayo and his long time friend Harley toward the nearest bar:

Tayo was sitting under the elm tree in the shade when Harley came riding up on the black burro. The burro was veering hard to the right, attempting to turn around and go in the opposite direction.5

Tayo rides a blind gray mule, which usually walks in blind circles:

Tayo didn’t even bother to hold the reins; he knotted them the way Josiah had shown him when he was a little kid, so
that the reins stayed together on the horse’s neck… and he couldn’t accidentally drop one.6

Now, Tayo follows the black burro in equally blind confidence. As with the ordinary crossbreed cattle, Silko uses or allows story to bring out the light contained in these emblems. One soon forgets Harley’s comical burro, as Harley himself veers more and more towards the leaving road. Tayo’s blind mule too, has been only a comical way of introducing Tayo’s apparent preference to the gray area between good and evil. His determination to plod along as if he could not see that his fellow veterans are heading down a far worse path than the path of the bar.

Human beings are of farcical type, exposing our human flaws in a manifestly physical way, builds up Silko’s philosophy. The drunk Indian veterans who had attempted to fight over Helen Jean are described by Silko. She writes:

The Apache had been watching Helen Jean; he was watching the Isleta rub against her. The Isleta grabbed her arm. “Let’s go,” he said. She didn’t move. The Apache jumped up, ready to fight. “She doesn’t want to go with you”, the Apache said. The Isleta turned to her; his eyes were pinched with rage. “You bitch! You think you’re better than a white woman?” He slapped her across the face. Her teeth cut her tongue and the inside of her mouth.7
Their lack of real love for women goes with their general ineffectuality. The whole scene parodies the war, all its supposedly ardent love for the motherland. All is proclaimed desire to protect wife and home forgotten in the blundering, futile rituals of fighting. These clowning scenes become more elaborate as the novel continues. An example of this, the size and complexity of the expedition organized to capture Tayo at his most harmless. He is carefully surrounded at night by veteran’s administration doctors in dark green government cars. Bureau of Indian Affair Police, and some of the old men of the Pueblo, just as if he were insane, hostile, and armed. Tayo had spent the whole summer outdoors looking after skinny cattle and rediscovering the old religion, by dreaming a beautiful Indian woman. The absurdity of this great stakeout does not cancel, but accompanies and points up the danger to Tayo.

If the stake out nearly loses its humour altogether, the cause is its origin in the evil mind of Emo. His humour is like the glimmerings and grim streaks of a distorting mirror, which reflects and mocks the sacred. Emo’s love of loud laughter at the expense of others is not a part of traditional Pueblo life. His amusement at the downfall and death is only a parody of the witticism of the Hopi who arranged ahead of time for his own corpse to be dressed
on his costume, swung to and fro on the roof, and thrown into the plaza by his nephews and sons. Again Emo devoted himself to ritual sacrifice though it hurts others and leaves him unscratched. A diametric contradiction of the risks and death undergone by the great Salish or Cowichan female in order to oppose the exploitation and wrapping Indians.

Clearly Silko in the *Ceremony* does not practice Emo’s type of humour. She teases her readers in a gentle manner that can be enlightening one. When Tayo is ordered to shoot a Japanese soldier and suddenly he sees him as his Uncle Josiah, everyone around him tells him that Josiah couldn’t be in two places at the same time. Tayo was suffering from high fever and due to which he had hallucinations. It is also natural with malaria or battle fatigue:

> The sergeant had called for a medic and somebody rolled up Tayo’s sleeve; they told him to sleep, and the next day they all acted as though nothing had happened, they called it battle fatigue, and they said hallucinations were common with malarial fever.⁸

This thinking, even though Tayo’s cousin Rocky practices it, is Anglicized, afraid to contradict, afraid to hear about hallucinations. It is because of their association with psychosis, anxious not to reflect on their content. The joke is on readers who believe that Tayo has had a symptomatic hallucination; for
if we have allowed this smoke screen to be raised between us
and the import of the hallucination or vision. We have to wait
many pages for another chance to understand Tayo’s great love
for his people. Actually the vision, which is a projection of Tayo
and Josiah’s mind, illustrates for Tayo the universality of human
goodness and the evil of killing. When, reading along, we finally
realize that, it is natural to smile at earlier foolish Europeanized
faith of ideas and mental illness. Silko in the Ceremony teases
whites in a similar way by letting to know the head of an Indian
family may say to a grown up daughter: “Church”, she said,
wiping her eyes with a Kleenex from her apron pocket. “Ah
Thelma, do you have to go there again?” 9 But noting the Indian’s
in the area created a certain medicine man, the mixed-blood
Betonie, with ability to aid “Victims tainted by Christianity or
liquor.”10 Perhaps Silko is teasing a little by getting to read a book
about a group of men. Many white Americans well enough to
know that is needed to be led to a vantage point where one has to
admit that the great spiritual war between good and evil may take
place. In this case she seems to enjoy arousing the stereotypical
interpretation.

Here, the Laguna medicine man attempts to convince Tayo
that he would have received more complete religious training had
he had an Indian father. In reality Tayo’s maternal grandmother and his maternal uncle have formed the little boy perfectly. They are the people of ancient custom who would have preferred as his teachers. While they told him stories and explained their beliefs, Tayo always listened with love and a desire to learn more. Some of the old ways, he rediscovered before the war and after that, he continues to discover the accessibility and power of the old religion. Being a half-breed they never kept him from listening to his elders of both sexes, from living with his mind open to the natural world, or from wondering about the sacred manner of life.

Silko lets her special mixed-blood medicine man Betonie answer those Indians who oppose any change in traditional tales she includes in the novel. A happy example is her retelling of the battles of the seasons over *Yellow Woman*, a summer fertility spirit. In Silko’s over version, *Yellow Woman*, now called Ts’eh Montano or Water Mountain Woman, still prefers summer, now represented by Tayo. In Silko’s tale, however, the bad spirit of winter is introduced in the form of a mountain lion, who also appears as an old Indian hunter, or as the mountain lion. Winter tricks the cowboy into hunting it so that Tayo can escape. In the form of a hunter, the good spirit of winter gives the early snowstorm, not newly interpreted as a battle, but as a friendly help
in Tayo’s recovery of the rustled family cattle. The hunter, who is most knowledgeable in the old ways, accompanies the younger man down the trail to safety and offers him hospitality. When this old man discovers Tayo’s love for Ts’eh, he is not at all distressed. He smiles and makes no objection to her going off with Tayo.

When Ts’eh comes to join Tayo where he has pastured the spotted crossbreed cattle, the novel makes it more and more evident that she is mountain spirit helpful to all forms of life. Perhaps, the once wild cattle can be read as summer’s equivalent of the mountain lion, and the once crippled yellow bull as Tayo now is in his full health. The affectionate revision is the very opposite of the deterioration or distortion feared by those Indians, perhaps older, who say the old ways must not be changed. To change and to expand the story to such an extent while making it an expression of Indian values better suited to this time. When we must get rid of battles and bombs, is a way of teasing while reassuring the traditional minded people. Silko turns her teasing towards younger Indians like Helen Jean, who evaluates Tayo as the least friendly male at the Y Bar, when in fact he is the only one who cares, even briefly, what is going to happen to her. As for half-breeds like Tayo, Silko in the *Ceremony* repeatedly exposes his gullibility towards erroneous white beliefs. His difficulty in believing that someone other than an Indian will steal, much less
than a white man steals, is a typical of Indian jokes about oppression. Silko in the *Ceremony* does not exclude herself from being teased either. At the end of her innovative portrayal of evil, she allows Tayo’s grandfather, the archetypal storyteller, to indicate his boredom at the story of Emo’s downfall:

Old Grandma shook her head slowly, and closed her cloudy eyes again, “I guess I must be getting old,” She said, “Because these goings-on around Laguna don’t get me excited any more.” She sighed, and laid her head back on the chair. “It seems like I already heard these stories before… only thing is, the names sound different.\(^\text{11}\)

This narrative irony is a little joke for all. Silko had written an original work about evil, any Indians who might have been worrying about her modernization of the stories. Whites who might have believed the test of art as originality, or may be for entertainment, rather than spiritual power. The serious effectiveness of Silko’s tale is indicated by the passage, which follows:

Whirling darkness
Has come back on itself.
It keeps all its witchery
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.¹²

All the instances of Indian humour in *Ceremony* have been overlooked by some of the whites, possibly because of lack of contact with non-European communities or culture. Indian irony can be either so subtle or so keyed to an understanding from within what is funny to a people that an outsider would fail to recognize it. Such outsiders tend to take many light passages in *Ceremony* as solemn or tense, and wear themselves out before the real crisis comes. Although she grew up on the Laguna Pueblo reservation, she is familiar with European culture, as she has correctly called it. She went to white schools, and she has read Steinbeck, Faulkner, Poe, Borges, and Flannery O’ Connor, some with great interest, others with fascination. She understands this culture so well that she has been able to play with European black humour, which responds not to the beautiful blackness of the black people, of night time outdoors, or of the forest shadows, the blackness involved in black humour is the darkness of opposition to light. Silko splits black humour as she did the spirit of winter.
She delineates one type of black humour characterized by Emo, which bases its worldview on black or unrelieved hatred and acts as the agent of hatred. She deploys a second type of black humour related to the irony of Indian ritual, characterized by Tayo and Betonie, which include hatred and white oppression in its worldview without allowing them to monopolize the world. The former blackness enjoys the degradation of others and degrading things as they are, but shouldn’t be. The first is death dealing, the second death paralyzing. Tayo at times carries irony as far as black humour is concerned. When other barflies buzz about their equality with whites, Tayo tells a more truthful, and by contrast, more ironic narrative about their states:

But Tayo yelled, “No! No. I didn’t finish this story yet. See this dumb Indian they, these good times would last. They didn’t ever want to give up the cold beer and blond cunt. Hell no! They were America the Beautiful too, this was the land of the free just like teachers said in school. They had the uniform and they didn’t look different no more. They got respect.” He could feel the words coming out faster and faster, the momentum building inside him like the words well all going to explode and he wanted to finish before it happened.\textsuperscript{13}

When Emo repeatedly brings and how whites have taken everything the Indians had, Tayo wisecracks to himself: “May be
Emo was wrong. May be white people didn’t have everything. Only Indians had droughts.”14. This private shot of wry acknowledges both white injustice and Emo’s dishonesty, thus mentally challenging blackness, not just learning to endure it. By blaming Indian deprivation on whites, however truly, Emo thinks he can deny Indian responsibility to take care of the arid land the Indians have. Harley laughs over the discrimination of a flock of sheep he had left unguarded, but this laughter warns Tayo of the evil. Tayo sometimes goes drinking with these defiant veterans, but what he defies is the blackness in their hearts, what he regrets is their spiritual death.

Emo in contrast, has the blackness of an abandoned house in winter, for his amusement comes from his arrogance and negation, his apathy and love of stasis. He cherishes what he think was the message of the U. S. Army to him. He was the best, they told him, and some men didn’t like to feel the quiver of the man they were killing. Some men got sick when they smelled the blood. But he was the best, he was one of them. The best in the U. S. Army.

Emo mocks traditional Indian values, despises everything living, and spends his time spending contempt, resentment, idleness, pleasure in the humiliation and suffering of other people in short, the hatred. His first diatribe in Ceremony is against
reservation ranchlands: “Look what is here for us. Look. Here’s the Indian’s mother earth! Old dried-up thing!” Tayo’s anger made his hand shake. Emo was wrong. All wrong.”

By breaking the law of reverence; his saracisms raises land laughter. By speaking only of white women, he gets his fellow veterans, except Tayo, to laugh and cheer at stories about bringing women down. By referring to Japanese soldiers, he tricks the others into rejoicing at the smashing of fellow people of colour. They are fooled because Emo’s jokes resemble jokes made “not to take our minds off our troubles, but to point out ways to survive and even laugh.” Unfortunately, Emo’s references to troubles do not carry hint about survival or corrections of faults. Not noticing the difference, Emo’s bar buddies, most of them, commit themselves by every laugh to discard a little more of Indian tradition, their only possible road to a satisfying life.

Emo’s gags are those of revulsion, he is a scriptwriter of black comedy. He uses the full artistry when he organizes the complicated stakeout against Tayo. The stake-out puts Tayo in a tribal bind, for the outcome must be, Emo thinks, that Tayo will be shot, locked up, or something worse. If captured, Tayo’s punishment will be witty by Emo’s standards, for Emo has reported him to the authorities for bestiality, for thinking he is Jap,
for living in caves as if he had reverted to the primitive. These slanders invert Tayo’s best qualities as an Indian, for he loves caves and pictographs which are connected to the traditional religion, he recognizes his bond with Japanese people, works hard to secure and care for the family cattle, and loves women in fully sacred, sexual way that Emo has no notion of similarly. Emo’s reason for including the old men in the stake-out is apparently not only to cut the Pueblo off from the help; Tayo can give with ideas like that of the hybrid cattle, but also to hurt Tayo for wanting so much to be accepted by the elders. No one can accept such kind of downfall. Emo’s laughter is the novel’s climax.

Emo’s aim in all his activity is not just to get a laugh. Betonie describes his aim and that of other evil wishes as

> the trickery of the witchcraft… they want us to believe all evil resides with white people. Then we will look no further to see what is really happening. They want us to separate ourselves from white people, to be ignorant and helpless as we watch our own destruction.¹⁷

Betonie would rather see a separation between good and evil, starlight and blackness, than between Indian and white. Ts’eh Montano gives the novel’s second description of Emo’s aim when she calls him and others like him
the destroyers: they work to see how much can be lost, how much can be forgotten. They destroy the feeling people have for each other... Their highest ambition is to gut human beings while they are still breathing, to hold the heart still beating so the victim will never feel anything again... only destruction is capable of arousing a sensation, the remains of something alive in them.18

This lust to end the interior life of others why Emo laughs around eventually leads to cruelty. When his own laughter finally surfaces, he is openly laughing at the flaws and vulnerability of his loyal friends- at their falling over and insulting each other. It is at their fighting and mutual contempt, and at the same time, at the moral degradation, mutilation, desexing, loss of individuality, death and dehumanization of his friends who had attempted to befriend Tayo. Emo’s perverse comic ecstasy seems to derive from his satisfaction that Indians are as worthless as greedy whites have always claimed they are. The validation of his black interpretation of the world makes him laugh, but, having carried laughter at the expense of others to its logical conclusion, he laughs alone.

Sometime before this scene at the abandoned uranium mine, Betonie had told Tayo about a witch’s contest in which a witch who invents white people with nuclear capabilities wins the evilest action award. Betonie tells the story to inject laughter into Tayo’s
overwhelming preoccupation with white dominance. But Betonie does not and Silko does not mean to discount destructiveness. Her ironies about uranium mines have thus a good chance to overcome any habits Anglo-American who may have ignoring not only Los Alamos, but also Pueblo Indians. If the character of the Pueblos is allowed an influence on American life equal to that of other ethnic groups, one can easily trace out, acknowledging the danger of nuclear and other forms of destruction, making things grow and appreciating things that are alive and natural.

Silko in *Ceremony* sees through Emo’s descriptions and can see where his black philosophy must end. To acknowledge evil and its study it has not made a convert of her. However, she plays a worst trick on Emo than he wanted to play on Tayo, as a true comic novelist always does; she thwarts evil and establishes the good in a new and more complete harmony. Hers is the laughter that rises in the spirit when the preachers of inferiority and inevitable doom have been disapproved and defeated. What is the finest in her is the wisdom of her method of bringing the good out of its trials safely. Her wisdom is that of choosing love. Silko weaves traditional tales into her narrative. These tales reveal the only principles by which Tayo can escape Emo and even stop Emo’s work against a revitalization of the Pueblo. Tayo comes to
his most difficult task, not to kill Emo, in the context of two Pueblo tales, those of the gambler and of arrow boy. These tales also deal with the worst realities honestly, but in a victorious or comic manner. Tayo, and equally the novel, needs the tales in order to find some way to prevent Emo’s triumph without bringing Tayo down. As La Vonne Ruoff has argued,

Silko emphasizes the need to return to the rituals and oral traditions of the past in order to identity. Only when this is done is one prepared to deal with the problems of the present... Silko demonstrates that the Keres rituals and traditions have survived all attempts to eradicate than and that the seeds for the resurgence of their power lie in the memories and creativeness of her people.19

When Tayo resists all the forces that have been turned against Pueblo holiness, he acts much as the legendary Arrow boy and the gambler act when they oppose the witchery and its sadistic works. Although Tayo had been taught in school to scorn the old stories, he believes them and understands their modernity, their applicability to his situation. This reversal is the ultimate delusion of the whites who married into Silko’s family, who like many other Protestants thought protestant Christianity. Tayo realizes that he must not kill Emo, and even that he refuses the more cleverly Emo tempts him to attack. Instead Tayo has to watch and know, to
avoid being seen or known, to resist every pressure, even appeals to his goodness. If he will simply stay out of range, Emo’s most powerful attack will whirl back on its point of origin. Tayo has realized before the final showdown that “He had to bring it back on them. There was no other way.”

Although the last scenes of *Ceremony* have a number of surprises, they have been prepared for Tayo’s refusal to be caught up in the dynamics of mutual destruction. It seems cowardly, as whites Judge Bravery, even disloyal, by army standards. In truth, his hiding behind the rock is his least white, least hateful action, even perhaps, a sort of yellow humour, to go with his Asian connection. In the outcome, Silko perhaps silently, but also happily at Emo’s final defeat. In this way, as a comic novelist, Silko has brought in a third type of black humorist, the one who steals the tricks of the blackest against the owners. Anglo or Anglicized easily Silko’s punishment of Emo, thinking he has gotten away scot-free. That’s because she outfoxes him as Tayo did, aikido style, without violence. He might have died, but the old men of the Pueblo only exile him, and he chooses to go to California, the epitome of all that he admires. Silko is using the most prosperous part of her region, a proud achievement of white culture in his country, as the most severe punishment she can assign, far worse
than mutilation, an early death, or life in gallop. Emo’s exile is about self-proclaimed superiority of white institutions. If the old men were to bring changes against Emo, government courts would probably either discredit Tayo’s testimony or execute Emo. None of their methods would stop Emo’s impact on the Pueblo. The Laguna answer to capital punishment is more intelligent, avoids imitating murderers, and punishes them less mercifully. Whites with some appreciation for Indian culture sometimes express a surprising certitude that

this once great culture is being lost or replaced by an Anglo-culture that does not have the same respect for nature ... and is in some way morally inferior to it.\textsuperscript{21}

Silko in her \textit{Ceremony} shows Indian civilization is living and has the potential to transform Anglo-culture. As she said in 1978 interview, “These things will only die if we neglect to tell the stories. So I am telling the stories.”\textsuperscript{22} Moreover she has turned the quietest laugh against the loudest. She purifies the illusions about white culture and those about Indian culture as well. Ultimately she demonstrates that combing these cultures as her narrative does, has the power to civilize both.

\textit{Storyteller} by Leslie Marmon Silko begins with image of

A tall Hopi basket with a single figure woven into which might be grasshopper
or a Hummingbird Man. Inside the basket are hundreds of photographs.23

The form and structure of the text reflect this image. It is a collage of stories, poems, myths, and folktales, autobiographical notes, letters and pictures. And like the photographs, in the basket, the subjects are frequently the same, only the details change. Silko tells us that the photographs, many of which were taken by Grandpa Hank

Have always had special significance with the people of my family and the people at Laguna...[They] have a special relationship to the stories can be traced in the photographs.24

The book itself is shaped like a picture album or a scrapbook, creating a certain intimacy and familiarity between the text and the reader. Silko seems to invite the reader to share with her a personal as well as mythological, historical and fictional set of memories. The book is, in fact, autobiographical in the sense that it places emphasis on the shaping of the author’s development. Storytelling for Silko is more than “just... sitting down and telling a once-upon-a-time kind of story.”24 This characteristic Native American point of view according to Simon Ortiz is

a way of life... a trial which I follow in order to be aware as much as possible of what is around me and what part I am in that life.25.
The reader is introduced to Silko’s family through the pictures and the stories. One sees and hears about her father, her sister, Auntie Susie, Grandpa Hank, Uncle Walter, Great Grandmother Anaya, Great Grandfather Marmon, Grandma A’mooh, Aunt Bessie, Great Grandpa Stegner and his brother Bill, Grandma Helen and even old Juana, who raised Grandma Helen. Each photograph tells a story and the story is “written” in the images present, the juxtaposition between photographs and text, and in the pictures omitted. We “read” the pictures as we read the myths and stories, looking for broader connections between them and Silko’s life as she presents it in the text. Terry Eagleton, in *Literary Theory An Introduction*, suggests that “the process of reading... is always a dynamic one, a complex movement... unfolding through time.”

The oral storytelling tradition, which forms the basic structure of Silko’s text, involves the reader in such a dynamic process. That the reader becomes participant in the text, connecting stories, finishing them rewriting them, and constructing his or her own stories in the “gaps.” These gaps exist in every text according to Wolfgang Iser in *The Reading Process* because no tale can ever be told in its entirety ... [Its] is only through inevitable omissions that is a story gains its dynamism...[T] hus whenever the flow is interrupted... the opportunity is given to us to bring into play our
own faculty for establishing connection for filling in the gaps left by the text itself.27.

The gaps in Silko’s *Storyteller*, however, form a greater and more significant part of the story than those found in traditional texts. Like many Native Americans and modern texts, it is so fragmentary in form that “One’s attention is almost exclusively occupied with search for connections between fragments.”28

As the reader is seduced into the storytelling session, distinctions blur between the teller and the told, and where one story ends, a new one begins. The most notable gaps and silence in *Storyteller*, reveals and attempts to mention around the absence of Silko’s mother. It is a book that appears to be substantially autobiographical and largely about the significance of female myths and bore bearers. Silko’s mother is mentioned only once in the entire text only in connection with Grandma A’moooh:

> It was a long time before I learned that my Grandma A’moooh’s real name was Marie Anaya Marmon. I thought her name really was “A’moooh.” I realize now it had happened when I was baby and she cared for me while my mother worked.29

Stories about fictional, mythological and surrogate mothers, however, abound in the text. Not only does the book begin with Aunt Susie who functioned as surrogate mother to Silko, listening to her, answering her question, and passing “down an entire
But it is dominated by the myths and stories of *Yellow Woman*. The Yellow Woman myth is originated in traditional Cochiti and Laguna Pueblo stories. There are many versions of the story of *Yellow Woman*, but in each telling of the story *Yellow Woman* is abducted or seduced by the sexually exciting, potentially dangerous Ka’tsina spirit. When she is drawn to him, “her physical sensation and desire, blot out thoughts of home, family, and responsibility.”\(^1\) She leaves her husband and children to follow her. Sometimes she returns to the family, other times she does not. This union, however, almost always results in positive benefits for the tribe. Accordingly to Paula Gann Allen in *Spider Woman’s Granddaughter*, Yellow Woman may be “a Spirit, a Mother, a blessed ear of corn, an archetype, a person, a daughter,… an agent of change and of obscure events, a wanton, an outcast, a girl who runs off with Navajos, or Zunis, or even Mexicans.”\(^2\)

Whichever role she assumes, *Yellow Woman* functions as a powerful image of freedom, sexuality, power and creativity. She is simultaneously the “good” mother who fulfills the traditional role of wife and nurturer and the “bad” mother whose sexuality is a powerful force, capable of both creation and destruction. As a
daughter and as a woman, Silko must come to terms with the female power and sexuality she recognizes in her mother and in herself; she must negotiate the dangerous territory between mother and daughter, self and other, freedom and responsibility, saint and wanton. To name her mother is to name herself; to acknowledge her mother is to acknowledge her own divided self. Silko must, therefore, silence the literal mother whose power, whose potential for wilderness and wantonness, frighten her only by putting her into a story, weaving both the mother’s and daughter’s stories into myths and stories of Yellow Woman. Silko can find her own voice, unite the dual aspects of her own psyche, and take her rightful place in the line of strong women who proceeded her. Motherhood in Silko’s stories has duality that is based in history, tradition and myth and creates conflict for the Native American woman today. Motherhood for the Laguna’s is greater than personal and familial state but has implications for the community and for the earth as well. This scope and conflicts inherent in it are explored in the various telling of the Yellow Woman stories. In their context Silko opens up the possibilities for exploring the many dimensions of motherhood for herself. The silences and the gaps in the text are a kind of display to write and rewrite the version of Silko stories as Silko writes and rewrites for her own self.
In the spirit of such a storytelling tradition, Silko her self tells a story by saying that I will tell the stories:

The way I heard it was... and then proceed with another story purportedly a version of a story just told but the story they would tell was a wholly separate story, a new story... a part of the continuing which storytelling must be.33.

Like *Yellow Woman*, the women, in Silko’s family have been seduced into marriages that separated them from their culture, leaving Silko somewhere on the fringes of Laguna life. If, as Paula Gunn Allen suggests, two of the role that *Yellow Woman* may take are that of an outcast and an agent of change. Then the responsibility for the isolation and dissonance that Silko feels as a result for her mixed-blood lies with mother. By merging her mother’s story and her own with myth of *Yellow Woman*, Silko attempts to bring the disparate places together to identify what it is to be a half-breed. The process of telling, revising and retelling of the old stories, the conversation of the traditional into the contemporary, Silko returns to her heritage, allowing her, like *Yellow Woman*, to return home with a new story to tell. Since Laguna heritage is strongly matrilineal, the mother’s story is particularly crucial in identifying the daughter and establishing her place in Laguna society. Women control the houses, the property, the lineage of children, and many of the
decisions about marriages. The women in Silko’s family provide strong role models for her. As her mother used to be away on work, she was raised by

her grandmother Lillie, who had been a Model a mechanic, and her great grandmother Marie or ‘A’mooh, a full blood from Paguate who... had gone to Indian School at Carlisle as soon as her many children were grown.34.

Like the Aunt Susie attended Dickinson college and, “When she returned to Laguna/she continued her studies/... even as she raised her family/and helped Uncle Watter run their small cattle ranch.”35

The women were not only remarkable in their accomplishments but in their ability to mesh the modern, westernized world of formal education and jobs with their traditional values and heritage. Grandma A’mooh “washed her hair in yucca roots and told the child about the old days.”36 Aunt Susie kept the oral tradition of storytelling alive and passed it down to Silko. Silko thinks of these women with affection and pride. She adds a line which shows how difficult it is for her to reconcile this power with her mother’s power, which she sees it as negative and says:

“And I think about that, and I try to think about my mother is there something about the way she and I have gotten along, or how we related to each other? ...If some
one was going to thwart you or frighten you it would tend to be a woman; yet see it coming from your mother sent by your mother.37

She can only “try” to think about her mother. Silko’s mother was a mixed blood plain Indian and she kept on the customary cradleboard until she was a year old. Yet she also went to work when Silko was a young child leaving Grandma A’mooh and her aunts to mother her. Thus, the mother is both present and absent in Silko’s life. Her mother weds with the traditional Native American customs of mothering with western need to leave the home to work. Since much of Leslie Silko’s sense of her place in the community is vested the identity of her mother and her mothers family. This dissonance sets up an inevitable conflict:

Among the keres, every individual has a place within the universe and that place is defined by clan membership. In turn, clan membership dependent on matrilineal descent. [N] aming your mother…enables people to place you precisely within the universal web of your life, in each of its dimensions: cultural, spiritual, personal, and historical.38.

Because of her mixed blood, Silko’s position in the community was on the periphery. Her house was “situated below the village, close to the river… on the fringe of things.”39. She was included in clan activities, ceremonial dances but did not dance herself. Silko seems
to belong nowhere and everywhere. Her place in the community is largely determined by her mother and, if her relationship with her mother is distanced or problematic, the consequence, according to Paula Gunn Allen:

are the same as being lost, isolated, abandoned, self-estranged, and alienated from your own life... Failure to know your mother, that is, your position and its attendant traditions, history and place in the scheme of things is failure to remember your significance, your reality, your right relationship to earth and society.\textsuperscript{40}.

The issue of motherhood is the literal, the figurative, and in the metaphorical sense central. Therefore, to Silko’s sense of self-her identity both as an individual and as a part of the whole. The repeated storytelling of the \textit{Yellow Woman} stories in \textit{Storyteller} is an attempt on Silko’s part to place her life in a larger context, to grapple with sexuality and seduction of her mother, her grandmothers, herself and her people, to create a new story, a new myth, out of the old stories and the fabric of her life.

In \textit{Storyteller}, the story of \textit{Yellow Woman} is told at least six different times and each telling is both the same and indifferent from the previous telling. The effect of this succession of stories, merged with the content of each story, suggests that, like Silko, we are caught in a web of storytelling in which the mythical stories
that we have known since “time immemorial” inform the patterns that our lives take, the stories that we will live. In this connection Kenneth Lincoln in *Native American Renaissance* says:

Words are believed to carry the power to make things happen, ritualized in songs, sacred story, and prayer. This natural force is at once common as daily speech and people’s names. The empowering promise of Language weds people with their native environment: an experience or object or person exist interpenetrant with all other creation, inseparable from its name. And names allow people to see themselves and the things around them. As words image the spirits in the world.\(^{41}\)

The act of telling name is an act of creation. Naming makes it so. In the *Yellow Woman* stories, Silko tries out a variety of stories and myths, telling each from a different stance. She tells traditional stories, mythological stories, and modern versions, in which *Yellow Woman* goes home to her family, and the versions in which *Yellow Woman* is killed. Some stories are funny and others are sad; some stories are cynical and brittle, others are lyrical and touching. It is as though Silko tries on a new persona for each story, envisioning both herself and her mother as the *Yellow Woman* of the story, exploring the choices available to women and the compelling needs and desires that drive women to make their choices.
In *Yellow Woman*, it is the act of telling and naming that transverses the distance between myth and reality, between story and life, and merges the two into one. The stranger by the river calls the woman *“Yellow Woman”* and she is seduced into the story, drawn inextricably into its pattern. She follows Silva:

She “did not decide to go… [She] just went. Moonflower blossom in the sand hills before dawn, just as… [She] followed him.”

Like the pattern in a spider web, the replication is inevitable. She wonders if

*Yellow Woman* had known who she was…if she knew that she would became part of the stories. Maybe she’d had another name that her husband and relatives called her so that only the Ka’tsina from the north and the storyteller would know her as *Yellow Woman*.

The story becomes her own story. When Silko tells the story, it becomes her story as well; both Silko and *Yellow Woman* are “drawn inextricably into [the]…Pattern.” Of the stories they create; *Yellow Woman* thinks that she

Will see some… and then I will be certain that his only a man… and I will be sure that I am not *Yellow Woman*. Because she is from out of time past and I live now and I’ve been to school and there are highways
and pickup trucks that Yellow Woman never saw. But all she can know is the moment. All she can feel is “the way he felt warm, damp his body beside me. This is the way it happens in the stories. I was thinking, with no thought beyond the moment.”

Perhaps we all live only in the moment and the moment is beyond our control, stories written and determined by the stories that have gone before, that have already been told, the stories unwires creating new versions of old stories and it is only in the telling that the patterns become real.

Silva tells Yellow Woman that “someday they will talk about us and they will say, “those two lived long ago when things like that happened’.” And Yellow Woman knew that

        If old Grandpa weren’t dead he would tell them what happened – he would laugh and say ‘stolen by a Ka’tsina, a mountain spirit- she’ll come home they usually do.’

In the end Yellow Woman decides to tell them “that some Navajo had kidnapped me, but I was sorry that old Grandpa wasn’t alive to hear my story because it was the Yellow Woman stories he likes to tell best.” In the telling, the story will become a new legend, a new myth, reinforcing the pattern that will inform the next story.

As Elaine Jahner suggests,
transmission of the knowledge of “stories”... involves not only the sharing of knowledge it has been shaped through one’s living with it.”

It is through such stories that Silko is able to integrate past and present, to resolve the conflicts and to restore balance in her life.

In each telling of Yellow Woman story, Yellow Woman abandons her family and goes off with the Ka’tsina spirit drawn to “his skin slippery against [hers].” Each time her actions are understandable, forgivable, inevitable. This story leads back to the gaps, the silences in the text about Silko’s own mother. One imagines that this contemporary version of myth is Silko rewriting her mother’s story, justifying her mother’s actions. Whether Silko actually felt abandoned by her mother physically, emotionally or spiritually is not relevant. Silko reminds sometimes what is called memory and what one calls imagination are not so easily distinguished. The telling of the story makes it real, and turns pain into celebration.

Silko weaves together both her own stories and her mother’s stories and in the process explores the power and dimensions of female sexuality. In the Yellow Woman stories, women are overcome time and again by their own overpowering passion. They are almost unhesitatingly ready to abandon ones life for another. These women must negotiate between two worlds, the
world of the family and that of self. The Native American version of this conflict, however, differs significantly from the Western version. In the Western tradition the mother who leaves her family is punished, in the Native American tradition she is celebrated. The *Yellow Woman* stories validate female sexuality, viewing the wildness and passion that leads to such improper, non-conformist behaviour as an ultimately creative act. This sense of self as sensual and sexual being may at certain times even work for the greater good of the community.

So, Silko weaves a new story out of the old one, a story about power, sex, love and the earth. Intercourse occurs between mother earth and the spirit and animal world. And like the other seductions in the *Yellow Woman* stories, this union results in good for the earth and the community. The mother, as sexual, sensual being as well as mother figure, is of central importance. For Silko to acknowledge and understand her own sexuality as well as her mother’s, she must see it in the greater context of mother as earth as well as mother as individual. She must see sexuality as ultimately creative and productive. She must once again tell the story so that the mother’s choice between self and child is not only an acceptable one but also a kind of necessary act:

In such comings-together of persons and spirits, the land and the people engage in
ritual dialogue… . The ultimate purpose of such ritual abductions and reduction is to transfer knowledge from the spirit world to the human sphere… the human woman makes little attempt either to resist or to tame the spirit of man who abducts her. Nor do men… attempt to control or dominate [the woman]. The human protagonists usually engage willingly in literal sexual intercourse with spirit… . This act brings the land’s power spirit, and fecundity in touch with their own, and so ultimately yields benefit further people.\textsuperscript{51}

The mother who acknowledges her own sexuality and who acts on that acknowledgement offers men and women a paradigm for healthy and whole relationship with each other. A woman’s role as wife, mother, earth is no longer viewed as constricting but as liberating.

The connection to the land must be particularly important to Silko. Today the Jackpile Mine is located in Laguna land near Pagnte. It is largest open pit uranium mine in existence, the deepest mineshaft is sunk into Mt. Taylor, the sacred Laguna Mountain, which is the traditional home of the Ka’tsina spirit. These mines have brought economic property to Laguna but at the same time cancer is spreading at an alarming rate, the number of children who are born with birth defects at Laguna is growing significantly. The economic system is contaminated and drinking water has radiation levels two hundred times greater than those
considered safe. If the mother is to survive, if earth is to survive, Silko suggests that the relationship between the spiritual, the physical and the human must be one of passion, intercourse and love. The stories merge and converge. The absent mother at the center of the text is the figure around which the entire figure revolves. Each story is her story that is Silko’s story, and in a sense, is a story for all. Just as the stories are told through blank pages, the silence, and the gaps in the text. When one look’s through Silko’s album of pictures, the absence of picture of her mother tells a story just as loudly as the presence of the pictures of others. Iser says in *The reading Process*:

> Although we rarely notice it, we are all the time engaged in constructing hypotheses about the meaning of the text. The reader makes implicit connections, fills in the gaps, draws inferences and test our hunches. [T] he text itself is really no more than a series of “cues” to the reader, invitation to construct a piece of language in to meaning. 52.

The series of stories about *Yellow Woman*, like the pictures, each serve as a different pose, a different landscape, but the subject remains the same, the identity of woman as mother and wife and the tensions between those roles and her sexuality, creativity and productivity. In leafing through the
album, telling the stories of the pictures, the reader can sense the family and its bindings with each other.

In Silko’s *Storyteller*, one must listen to the silence as well as the words. Out of that silence construct the stories to propel us into the future and connect them into the past. Leslie Silko is the storyteller and

the storyteller keeps the stories all the escape stories she says, “With these stories of ours we can escape almost anything with these stories we will survive.” “The Storytellor’s Escape”.53.

From the Western point of view, Silko’s book seems to announce by its title *Storyteller*, the familiar pattern of discovering who one is, by discovering what one does, and the pattern of identity in vocation. This is useful enough as a way to view Silko’s text. In the West it has been very long time since the vocational storyteller has had a clear and conventional social role. In Pueblo culture, however, to be known as a storyteller is to be known as one who participates, in a communally sanctioned manner, in sustaining the group; for a Native American Writer to identify herself as a storyteller today is to express a desire to perform such a function. In classic terms it means person, his self and his role are joined.

In the *Storyteller* Silko goes to the roots of Native American traditions. Storytelling is a kind of tradition to get solace and relief
for them. Silko tries to ponder on the place of woman in the native American life style. Her grandmother, auntie are the examples how these women are conducting this tradition. Different types of roles played by woman in the Native American tradition has great significance.

In a way *Storyteller* establishes a kind of link of the past-present and future life of these people. Storytelling is a type of verbal activity through which one can get the continuity with the life. Native Americans try to survive through this ancient tradition. It is the way they can establish their self and identity.

Leslie Marmon Silko’s second novel, *Almanac of the Dead*, portrays a nightmarish wasteland of violence, bestiality, cruelty, and crime. Deformed by grotesque familial relationships and debauched by sexual perversion, its characters are incapable of love. Even more chillingly, they seem, except for a few enraged revolutionaries, incapable even of hatred. *Almanac of the Dead* reveals an utterly amoral and atomized society in which each isolated member is indifferent to everything but the gratifications of his own enervated passions. He is connected to nothing; all existence outside himself is reduced to a stock of commodities for which he must compete. There is cause to use the masculine pronoun here; Silko’s focus of attack is explicitly on the
misogynistic, arrogantly hierarchical, and egocentric traditions of western liberal individualism. The rejection and subsequent disintegration of communal tradition and ethical discipline leaves a rutting ground for witchery. Silko’s monstrous characters demonstrate that the philosophy of primacy of the individual has in fact stripped individuals of the social and spiritual structures that define their humanity. Redemption depends upon reclamation of what seems irretrievably lost, a credible tells for ordered conduct and the essential interconnections that lend substance and coherence to such conduct.

In the depravity and the effect of self-absorption, the novel records stun both intellect and imagination. The pages are crammed with atrocities almost too heinous to imagine. Its characters induce nightmares, its plot, paranoia. The villains are Euro-American males. Vicious, manipulative homosexuality and injurious, even murderous, sexual perversions become relentless metaphors of the insane solipsism and phallocentric avarice that characterize the dominant culture. Gone is even a vestige sense of those virtues which underestimates the community; there are no personal values because the triumph of individualism has eroded every rationale for moral discipline. There are no institutional ethics because social systems are inevitably infected by the
corruption of their constitutions. There is no accountability because there is no one to whom one accounts, each man is his own arbiter. Contemporary Euro-American culture is spiritually and ethically rotten by an ideology that reward egotism. It is characterized by blind obsession with infantile self-gratification made terrifying by the vicious, power mad adult’s capacity to seize that with which it is obsessed. Control of sex, and wealth are the prizes of unscrupulous aggression, ruthlessness became the fundamental pragmatic. The collection of savage white men, each with his own horrific aberrations, staggers the reader almost into numbness, as if to prove how easily, how willingly one is desensitized to, and individually dissociated from the horror of moral vacuity and anomaly.

The unrestrained greed and brutality of these hallow men is continually emblematized in dissipated sexual perversions that provide entropic substitute for anything remotely resembling love. Men’s equation of carnal gratification with the infliction of pain and their gynophobic attraction to male partners reveal an endemic phallocentric, misogynistic, and egocentric savagery. The ability to feel even the ecstasy of orgasm is not believed that the men typically vacillate blandly between drug-induced stupors and deaden their inability to feel and sexual acts bizarre or sadistic or
dangerous enough to titillate them into imagining that they can feel. Beaufrey, who knew even as a small child that

he had always loved himself, only himself.
He could remember lying in a crib sucking on his hand, perfectly content, even blissful, who he was all alone.53.

He recognizes that his indifference to other people affords him enormous power to manipulate them. As an international broker in torture pornography and snuff films, he has amassed fortunes in proving his theory that men can be divided into: “Those who admitted that they enjoyed watching torture and killing and those who lied.”54

Films and videos do not sexually arouse him. However, “the other did not fully exist, they were only ideas flitted across his consciousness then disappeared”55. Beaufrey requires the warm corpuses of young male lovers he has driven to suicide.

The violent, phallocentric self-absorption that characterizes Beaufrey informs the capacity to love that typifies every so-called “successful” man in Silko’s novel. The pseudo-intellectual Mexican General J. confirms Beaufrey’s theory on men’s appetite for savagery, his favourite scholarly topics with his powerful lunch buddies are bloodshed and rape. He theorizes that the right and smell of blood is natural aphrodisiac because
“bloodshed dominated the natural world, and those inhibited by blood would in time have been greatly outnumbered by those who were excited by blood, rape for the general, is the happy conjunction of bloody violence and sexual subjugation.”

The corrupt Judge Arne, who presides over the Federal District Court in Phoenix, shares Beaufrey’s indifference towards other people. But whereas for Beaufrey women figure only as temporary annoyances to be dispassionately erased, the Judge manifests his gynophobia by physically injuring women during the sex act. Although he claims that he

\[
did \text{ not think gender really mattered; sex after all was only a bodily function, a kind of expulsion of the sex fluids into some receptable or another.} \]

He is clearly hostile to women. He becomes aroused in a brothel only by imagining his male companion ramming himself bestially into a shuddering woman, and he maintains his erections by pinching the nipples and clitoris of the gasping, protesting woman he is with until he draws blood. Far more than with prostitutes of either gender, however, who requires the exchange of a few words, the judge enjoy sex with his four mute basset hound bitches and his accommodating accomplice, the basset stud.
The gynophobic, phallocentric self-involvement implicit in loveless. Degenerate individualism perhaps culminates in the character of Serlo. Disgusted by the touch of men and horrified by even the thought of contact with women, he tries to mate with himself, by himself. Arrogant of his Sangrepura, he jealously saves and freezes each opalescent drop of his precious semen in stainless steel vials. Cronging at the filth and corruption of the genetically flawed human female, he invests part of his exploited wealth in his own research center to develop perfect human specimens from his own sperm in artificial uteri, and part of his wealth to develop

alternatives Earth modules... designed to be self-sufficient, closed systems, “where he and his hybrid progeny might live in hermetic protection from the defilements of earthly existence.58.

The absolute self-absorption and consequent utter lovelessness that characterize these men lead them predictably enough to obsessions with personal power. Empty of the sentiments that define humanity, each tries to give him a sense of substance by amassing more sex, money, and control that anyone else. The social hierarchies that form, accordingly, are determined by the degree to which each can wrest the instruments and emblems of power from the others Max Blue, suave and despotic mastermind of an international ring of flawlessly disciplined contract killers,
spends his time in apparent indolence at the Tucson Country Club, playing golf with his affluent and influential clients. His services are much to an art form. Each job is a custom-designed set piece suspended, isolated and inviolable, in time and space, each death becomes a tangible badge of someone else’s supremacy. Max, meanwhile, protected by a network of implicated officials and entrepreneurs, maintains a significantly regal bearing, receiving or refusing to receive supplicants and treating each other with whatever graciousness his station merits.

Beaufrey and Serlo accord themselves the highest position in the social hierarchy by virtue of their aristocratic lineage. Beaufrey sees everything as already belonging to him by birthright. As a child, his favorite book had been about the Long Island cannibal, Albert... . Fish because they shared not only social rank, but complete indifference about the life or death of other human beings. As a college student Beaufrey had read European history and realized there had always been a connection between human cannibals and the aristocracy: the rest of humanity by his calculation is his to devour.59.

His proprietary conviction is at one point briefly ruffled by an apprehension that he may lose total control over David, one of his sex and cocaine slaves. If David comes to love the child he has
mindlessly sired on the woman Seese. He needn’t have worried about being confounded by love. David’s fascination with his child’s features is entirely narcissistic. In his ingenuous arrogance, David has long since fallen prey to Beaufrey’s “game” one that begins with Beaufrey’s encourage “gorgeous young men such as David to misunderstand their importance in the world.” David fancies himself as an artist, a type Beaufrey find” the most fascinating...because they participated so freely” in their own destruction. David does participate, helping to drive their lover Eric to suicide, then shooting pornographically lurid photos of the naked mangled corpse. But in Beaufrey’s theater “ One act followed another”, he kidnaps the baby from its mother to watch David’s egocentric absorption with his replicated image, then kidnaps the child from David when he recognizes that “David is ripe” for the “final moves of the game.” After David is driven to death upon seeing the 35mm colour proof sheets of his baby’s dismembered scene, Beaufrey calmly takes commercial photos of David’s broken corpse and turns in dispassionate gladness, to his next source of cannibalistic satisfaction.

Serlo elevates the importance of his aristocratic blood even more highly. Investing his entire identity in his conviction of hereditary genetic superiority, he perhaps prefigures the end result
of misogynistic, earth gutting, Euro centric individualism. Fearing the day when the world would be “overrun with swarms of brown and yellow human larvae called native,” he coolly plans their mass extermination and stocks the underground vaults of his huge, Columbian estate with food, water and currency.60. Acknowledging a certain noble oblige to rape underling woman and so infuse their tawdry strains with Sangre pura, he nevertheless recoils in horror at the thought of so basely defiling his own purity. Casting himself in a godlike image, Serlo disdains the very planet he and his kind have spoiled. He plans his own ascension within space stations that could he loaded with the last of the earth’s uncontaminated soil, water and oxygen and would be launched in high orbits “where” the select few would continue as they always had, gliding in luxury and ease across polished decks of steel and glass islands looking down on earth… still sipping cocktails” while the rabble killed each other for a share of the dwindling resources of a dying planet.61

In a hegemony where status is determined by how much one is capable of taking and keeping everything, land, money, material human bodies and lives, are commodified, priced, and labelled for consumption. Max Blue’s anonymous victims, Beaufrey’s torture videos that “progressed conveniently into the ‘aulopsy’ of the
victim. Serlo’s across of stockpiles that he will surely never use, each characterizes the fundamental mindset of what Silko calls “Vampire capitalists.” Their motto, buy low, sell high. Beaufrey’s raw material includes kidnapped children and street punks lured by cocaine. Trig, broker in human organs, processes hitchhikers and the homeless. When it occurs to him that men who agree to sell their blood are men who would seldom be missed, Trig identifies an entreprenual opportunity. Those he determines to be alone in Tucson are “slowly bled to death, pint by pint” while Trig gives them blowjobs to distract them from their own murder. Even at that price, Trigg feels “they got a favour from him.” After all, “They were human debris. Human refuse. Only a few had organs of sufficient quality for transplant use. In another case, a police chief capitalizes upon his own resources at hand. As his investment in a lucrative pornography ring, he allows a cameraman to film official interrogations where women are sexually tortured and mutilated. An apt businessman, he recognizes a competitive threat, when he senses that the security of his position may be compromised by the cameraman’s excesses; he arranges and videotapes the castration of his potential rival.

The sadistic greed of police chief reveals the pervasive venom of individual morality. In a commodified and atomized
society where malevolence and depravity are prerequisites to power and status, the highest and noblest social institutions are inevitably as corrupt as the men who control them. The novel portrays American justice and judicial systems in which justice and law are never even remote issues. Those characters who wield power within governmental agencies regard their position quiet purely as avenues of access to unbounded power and profit. No one feels anything, except mistrust, for anybody. Senator do business with contract killers over salad at the country club. CIA directors deal with sleazy arms broker to protect the flow of mind-dreading cocaine across national borders. Drug kingpins arrogantly demand apologies and reparation when they are unconvinced by inept policemen. Cops are either stupid and depraved, or smart and depraved. The smart ones manipulate the stupid ones, and grow stupendously wealthy through cordial and intimate business relationships with top-level criminal. Jamie, one of the stupid ones, is sexually obsessed with chemical dependant upon the drug-smuggling Ferro until he is assassinated by his fellow officer at a theatrically staged drug raid. His boss, one of the smart ones, wisely appreciates the prudence (and the profit) in accommodating such manipulators and the swindlers as Max Blue, Judge Arne, the senator, the CIA, and the border patrol. The men charged with enforcing the law and upholding the principles of
justice are among the most viciously criminal and egomaniacal character in a novel full of egomaniacally lawless villains.

The church, that institution which most directly assures responsibility for teaching and modelling the virtues of human community, is revealed more as the source of moral degeneracy than as an energized force against it. Silko’s Indian characters perceive the Judeo-Christian tradition as irrational, bloody, cannibalistic and cruel. Menardo’s full-blood grandfather, explaining European chronic rootless alienation, compassionately calls them “the orphan people,” wounded and eternally broken “because the insane God who had sired them had abandoned them... throwing them out of their birth place, driving them away.”

Menardo’s driver Tacho (who together with his brother ELFeo emblematizes the mythical redemptive Sacred Twins) sees white people’s blind violence as culturally systemic:

The European invaders had brought their Jesus hanging bloody and dead from the cross; later they ate his flesh and blood again and again yet, typical of sorcerers or destroyers, the Christians had denied they were cannibals sacrificers.

The old Yaqui grandmother Yoeme notes that even idiots can understand a church that tortures and kills is a church that can no longer heal; it does not surprise her that
the spiritually lacerated whites who came to Americas sought to dress their wounds in failing to stop the extermination of Indians in the Americas is noted on several occasions by carious characters.66

In a chapter entitled “A Series of Popes Had Been Devils,” the paranoid Mosca, whose clarity of thought is revealed in drugs-induced visions, damns the clergy for lechery, theft, and duplicity. He sees the good deeds of the church as the work of a few “potential trouble makers” who are deviously co-opted to give the church “good publicity”. 67. There is some small ambivalence in Silko’s attitude towards Christianity, its effort, however feeble and spotty, to alleviate poverty and injustice are grudgingly acknowledged and Menardo, who is both irritated and threatened by educated Indians, blames the priests for having “treated them like human beings.”68. Generally, though, Silko seems to endorse the anti-Christian attitudes expressed by her Indian and several of her white characters, who interpret the brutal perversions of Christianity as “betrayal of Jesus” and of “Jesus creed of forgiveness and brotherly love.”69. Like justice and judicial system of the government, the church is another example of an ideologically compassionate and communally protective institution that has been raped and butchered by the combative avarice of androcentric Euro-American individualism.
Even the civil institution of marriage, which might have served as a refuge against the isolation of individualism, is doomed to fail within a social context that value only self-gratification. Despite an enormous cast of characters, there are few marriages in this novel, and there is neither love nor contractual fidelity between partners. Trust, respect, and compassion again succumb to the inevitable betrays of egocentric self-interest. Menardo, the Mexican mixed-blood, thinks he has won a valuable prize when he marries the fair-skinned Iliana with the stainless European lineage. Her prize is incredible wealth. Menardo thinks the polished and cosmopolitan Algerian young woman, an even rarer prize and marries her immediately after Iliana’s untimely death. Algeria wants Menardo’s money and protection, but joylessly sleeps with the abusive and insensitive Marxist Bartolome and yearns after the promiscuous Sonny Blue. Sonny Blue always despises women that he prefers to take them in the dark. The old smuggler Calabaza is married to Sarita, but wants her sister Liria, while he is in bed with his sister-in-law, his wife is in bed with the Monsignor. When Leah Blue learns of her husband Max’s death, “she had top fight of an impulse to laugh … she felt relief, not loss”.70.
The women characters, while they are typically less vicious and offensive than the men, are nevertheless incapable of love as well. Survival among misogynists has given them few choices. They can adopt the male value system of aggression, greed, and callousness, resist subjugation through a defiant and dehumanizing scorn or fall in speechless defeat. The cruelest and the most ineffectual women are white real estate tycoon Leah Blue who takes by force what she cannot buy and gives no thought to the consequences. Hoping, significantly to impress her father and brother, she manipulates a corrupt legal system into awarding her the underground water rights to a vast area of drought-choked Arizona in order to fill the network of streams, fountains, and canals in her luxury development, Venice. Training and experience has rendered her incapable of human affection and insensitive to any conception of selfless reciprocity, Leah only takes. Indifferent to her husband and sons, she alleviates her ennui with meaningless exploitative sexual affairs. The most fully developed of her loveless alliance is with the wheelchair-bound but eternally erect Trigg, whom she callously nicknames “steak-in-a-basket. When she hears he has been brutally murdered and his own organ is kept in deep-freeze, she is only marginally interested to note that she “didn’t feel anything. Instead of grieving, she immediately
begins to hope she will be questioned about his death, “because that young-police chief was really quite sexy.”

The character named Seese is ostensibly the opposite of Leah. Beaten into chronic silence by ruthless misogynists, Seese looks for protection in the invisibility of listless acquiescence and the insensitivity of drug-induced torpor. Formerly a topless dancer in a sleazy nightclub where the girls are required to perform “bizarre sex acts for paying customers.” She becomes David’s lover, unaware that he is merely using her to make Beaufrey jealous, as Beaufrey had used Eric to make David jealous. She accedes under pressure to one abortion, but insists, uncharacteristically, upon carrying her second pregnancy to term. After the baby is kidnapped by Beaufrey’s thugs, Seese vacuously dedicates herself to finding her child, putting her entire vague confidence in the psychic powers to Lecha, the mixed-blood, drug-addicted, T. V. psychic who can locate only dead people.

The Indian women, likewise victimized and perverted by male aggression and oppression, are equally incapable of love. Zeta and Lecha, twin sisters and putative protagonists of *Almanac of the Dead*, are sexually molested by their Uncle Federico throughout their childhood. Lecha is tricked into surrendering her virginity to him with the apparent complicity of the local priest.
Neither woman ever loves a man. Zeta has one sexual experience as an adult, her compensation to the fat and stinking Mr. Coco for a job promotion then chooses a life of celibacy. Lecha, conversely, amuses herself with strings of casual and indiscriminate sexual affair but evades even the most tenuous of emotional ties. The strident vituperation of their Yaqui grandmother, Yoeme, is the result of a lifetime of oppression at the hands of white men. Forced to marry a man she typically refers to as “that fucker Guzman”, whose name is clearly meant to recall the monstrous image of “pig-anus [Nono] de Guzman,” whose administration exterminated and enslaved Indians by the thousands in the sixteenth century. She spends her lifetime resisting powerful men whose greed and cruelty threaten the earth and the lives and welfare of the Indians who respect it. The revolutionary activist Angelita La Escapia, who names herself “The Meathook,” has sex with men who are weaker than her, but cares only for overthrow of the globally destructive and evil avaricious institutions that characterize Euro-American males. Predictably, natural, physical and emotional bonds are eroded by the same obsessive self-absorption that debases individuals and institutions. Those men who engage in sex with women see them as commodities to be acquired, consumed, and discarded. Those who do not see women as vile, contemptible earth-crawlers who exist beneath their
antiseptic intellectual concern. Everyone except Zeta is having sex with multiple partners, but no one loves any one, and the sex is fruitless. The only children in the novel are the mythical nomadic guardian’s of the Almanac and Seese’s memory of her baby Monte, who is dead before the action in the novel begins. But even maternity is incapable of engendering love. Although Seese’s child is both conceived and kidnapped while Sees is in her usual cocaine – and – alcohol fog, she is the best mother in the novel. She at least feels keenly the loss of her baby. None of the other women are careful particularly about their children, and the characters almost in variably despise their mother’s Zeta and Lecha, keepers of the sacred pages of the *Almanac of the Dead*, are something like co-mothers to the hopelessly maladjusted Ferro. Lecha bore him “one Friday morning”, there is no mention of his father’s identity-but “by Sunday noon Lecha had been on a plane to Los Angeles, leaving Zeta with her new baby.”74 Zeta names and rears him, but makes it plain to him from the outset that she is motivated by duty, and not by affection.

Lecha and Zeta are taught by their Indian grandmother to reject their own mother. Yeomen sees Amelia, the twins’ mother, and her other children as sickly, weak-willed, and worthless progeny of Guzman. Lecha’s friend Root, understanding that his
mother is ashamed of his speech impediment, hates her with a murderous fury. Trigg, who also feels that his mother rejects him out of shame, dreams somehow making enough money to win even faint favour. Sonny and Bingo, adult sons of Max and Leah Blue, call their mother by her given name, unable to think of her as mother to anyone, much less to them, Bingo fantasizes that she is killed, just to see if he would be able to feel anything if it really happened. Beaufrey, born because his mother was more afraid of abortion than of childbirth, is the unwelcome product of his mother. Finally middle-aged Parisian flying Serlo’s parents abandoned him to his pederastic grandfather, and Mosca was taken from his incompetent mother and trust into a series of foster homes. Traditionally regarded as nurturers and instinctual protectors of their children, women are portrayed as emotionally disturbed and victims of misogynistic, egocentric European traditions. Listening to another gunrunner Greonlee’s crass sexiest jokes just before she blasts him with. 44 magnums. Zeta “still had to marvel at the hatred white men harbored for all women, even their son”.75. Raped and degraded by centuries of male oppression, women’s survival has come to depend upon their ability not to feel. This malevolence against mothers in particular and women in general is figurative as well as literal; women in the novel are invariably victims of male fear and
hostility, but their treatment also metaphorically reflects the male contempt for the female earth. The earth is repeatedly referred to as the mother by various characters not all of them are Indian. Throughout the novel the word “rape” is applied uniformly to land and women. Yoeme argues that the white man’s “gaping emptiness” result from his having “violated the mother earth”,76. Korean computer wizard Awa Gee plots the destruction of the empires so that the “earth that has been seized and torn open, would be allowed to heal and rest in the darkness.”77 Sterling, the banished Laguna Indian, recalls the old folks warning of the terrible consequence of the brutal wounding and scarring of “Mother Earth”78. The metaphor is underscored by the correlation between men’s relationships with women and their connection to the land and analogously, their degree of sterile, narcissistic self-absorption. Again Serlo emblematizes the final result of misogynistic disdain for the earth. He owns and retains sole authority over vast tract of land, yet he is incapable of the most elemental relationship with any woman, including his mother. He speaks distastefully of raping women not because of even the vaguest sense of human affinity but because rape would necessitate the squalor of physical contact. Just as he has dissociated himself completely from the company of women, he dreams of dissociating himself from the earth, living in a sterile,
androgynous womb of steel and glass within sealed orbiting space units. The women, conversely, must protect themselves and the earth from such male psychosis. This mission of the strong Indian women—Lecha, Zeta, Yeome, and the warrior Angelita, is to reclaim the ravished and impoverished land to restore it to its place of respect. Yeome at first marries the hated Guzman to prevent him and other whites from breaking their land-use agreements with the Yaquis. When that fails, she adopts guerrilla tactics to subvert the silver miner’s wanton rape to the earth and barely escapes death for treason and sedition. Angelita, champion of tribal rights to the earth, laments the Euro-American failure to understand that “the earth was mother.” She sees the aliens’ exploitative intellectual separation from the earth as artificial and ultimately doomed, because

no human, no individuals or corporations, no cartel of nations, could ‘own’ the earth; it was the earth who possessed the humans and it was the earth who disposed to them.  

Setting an imagery further emphasises the plaited themes of egocentric violence, loveless sterility, and dissociation from the land. The story takes place primarily in Tucson, a “city of thieves.” That “had always depended on some sort of war to keep cash flowing”, and the surrounding desert of Arizona and
Mexico. The relentless sun is murderous to those who will not learn the land, and the dearth of water threatens all life. Dead lawns of Tucson-Tucson, and Calabazas ironically notes, means plentiful fresh water” in Papago.82 One can scarcely be distinguished from gray pavement, and the spindly landscaping reflects the moral and spiritual drought suffered by its inhabitants. Existing water is so polluted it stinks. “Pools” are typically of blood, “waves” of nausea or hatred. Clear ponds of water are the surfaces upon which float severed heads of diplomats or the tiny bloated corpses of unwanted newborns. The only remaining pure water belongs to Leah, who is literally sucking the earth dry to create her model deserts city for the incredibly wealthy white elite. There is a little vegetation, and when flowers are mentioned, it is almost invariably in connection with grisly death. When Beaufrey’s boy Toy Eric blows his head apart with a.44. revolver, the critic raves about David’s glossy photographs of the suicide that evokes

a field of red shapes, which might be peonies-cherry, ruby, deep purple, black-and the nude human figure nearly buried in these “blossoms” of bright red.83.

When Menardo sees a wall of vining purple flowers he can think only of the “twists of human intestines.”84. The assassinated motorcyclist hanging upside down in the blossoming palavered
tree is reported as a “strange fruit” by the woman who sees the corpse as she drives to work. Water, the source of all life, flowers, the harbingers of renewed harvest, and fruits, the fulfilment of the flowers promise, are all distorted into sinister images of detached, meaningless death, inevitable legacy of a tradition of isolate immoral self-absorption.

Yet, the novel is by no means without hope. Rather, it addresses from another perspective the potentials of witchery and the creative value of stories so gracefully expressed in Silko’s profoundly hopeful first novel, *Ceremony*. *Almanac of the Dead* is an apparently miscellany of isolated stories that gradually assume design in the readers consciousness. This growing awareness of interconnection is, according to the author the function of stories. They always bring us together, keeping this whole together, combating people’s natural tendency to run off and hide or separate themselves from others in times of violent, emotional experience. The *Almanac*, an ancient collation of sacred story abstracts, serves as metaphor for the importance of memory, one of the central themes of Silko’s first novel. *Almanac of the Dead*, garishly illustrates the realization of that threat. Yet this story, like Tayo’s becomes dynamically charged within the consciousness of the hearer, and so promises the possibilities of different course.
The hope that *Almanac of the Dead* is mere implicit, than evident. As Silko once said of Pueblo storytelling,

> a great deal to the story is believed to be inside the listener, and storyteller’s role is to draw the story out of the listener, and storyteller’s role is to draw the story out of the listeners.”

The contemporary America of the novel is on the surface wasteland of dead possibilities, a treacherous desert where the promise and refreshment implicit in love have been blasted by the rapacious brutality of white male egoism. Among the empowered, all human emotion, sentiment, and compassion have brought together in the withering aridity of European individualism. Avarice is the only remaining motivation for action; suspicion is the only renaming human connection. Even the sexual urge, the most primal guarantee of regeneration, has turned inward upon itself to produce a mutant brood of scrofulous monstrosities. Yet, although scourged and blighted, hope remains alive. The reclamation and restoration of loving relationships among people and with the land will come, according to Silko’s optimistic Indians. The healing will take time, and it will require vigilant attention to history if we are to identify and resist present sources and manifestations of witchery. But the prophecies of the Almanac are explicit, the blood-maddened male Death-Eye Dog will die. A
renewed era of active spiritual and social community in the Americas will ultimately prevail.

Leslie Mormon Silko, a mix blood writer has strong roots in the Native American culture and history. As a creative artist and follower of Native tradition, literature is an extension of oral tradition for her. Silko as a writer focuses on the rich socio-cultural traditions of the Native Americans and tries to establish and reclaim the identity of these people through her literature. Her poetry, short stories, novels and her literary activities in all are of the same interest. At the same time she strongly condemns the white colonialism which is responsible for the destruction of these traditions coming from years together. She considers these Euro-American power hungry colonial people for the natural, physical, emotional and psychological erosion of these innocent people. At times Silko is very aggressive in condemning white people.

In *Ceremony* Silko’s protagonist Tayo is the representative example of confusion in all sense. Being an American young boy, he participates in the World War II as a soldier, while fighting with the enemies he is in confusion with Japanese and his own people due their similar physical feature. The result of all this is that his brother Rocky is killed in front of him. The war, the brutal killing makes him psychologically imbalanced. He tries to escape from it;
he tries to see the refuge in liquor, but it is useless. Then he gets the
treatment of European based medicine in the hospital. But all these
things are futile. Ultimately he has to go through the treatment of
traditional medicine man Betonie. His religious rituals, chanting of
songs brings him to the normal level. This kind of ancestral
treatment is the only solution for all the Native Americans. Their
original sacred places grabbed by these white people and their
encroachment in all the area causes confusion in the minds of the
Native people. So, as Tayo seeks his original, ancestral world,
other victims of the white domination seek the same kind of world
where they can get peace and solace. Silko as an artist creates this
kind of theme in her creative writing.

In *Storyteller* the writer, presents a type collage of stories,
poems, myths, folktales, autobiographical notes, letters and
pictures. Here, Silko shares a set of personal, mythological,
historical and fictional memories with the reader. The reader
comes across the important figures like Silko’s father, her sister,
Aunt Susie, Grandpa Hunk, Uncle Walter, Great grandmother
Anaya, Great grandfather Marmon, Grandma Amooh, Aunt
Bessie, Great grandpa Stagner and his brother Bill, Grandma Helen
and even old Juana, who raised Grandma Helen. Their
photographs and the captions speak louder to give deep meaning
of their golden time. The title of the book itself has deep meaning of continuity with the time factor. It has a pattern of discovering who one is, by discovering what one does and the pattern of identity invocation.

The skill of the writer is that she weaves the web of time in which past, present and future are brought together to give the sense of people of her clan as a member of Native American group as well as the member of the human history. The writer also asserts her strong message by saying that the world before arrival of the white was pure, non-corrupt and very close to nature and humane. The present world which is under the domination of whites created numerous problems before the original inhabitants. The twist for the life is how to survive and where to survive leads to severe problem like the question of existence. Most of the Native Americans prefer their original ancestral world. They quest for their “Home Coming” in their own motherland under the rule of white rulers. Silko very emphatically registers her protest to the white hegemony and prefers the ancestral world. All the characters in her creative work crave for the same. Their quest is to return to their once real world, now a world of dream.

Leslie Marmon Silko has published her massive novel *Almanc of the Dead* in 1991. This novel portrays the present
America as a nightmarish, wasteland of violence, bestiality, cruelty and crime. It reveals an utterly amoral and automized society in which each isolated member is indifferent to everything but the gratification of his own inervated passions. He is connected to nothing; all his existence outside himself is reduced to a stock of commodities for which he must compete. Silko’s focus of attack is explicitly on the misogynistic, arrogantly hierarchical and egocentric traditions of western liberal individualism.

Silko as a staunch follower of Native American cultural tradition asserts strongly that whatever devaluation of humanity has happened in America, it is due to the white hegemony. All the good traditions of Native people are crushed to the dust and the materialistic value system runned by the rulers causes the total disintegration throughout the country. All the white characters portrayed by the writer are the product of rotten ideology which results into egotism. The characters like Beaufrey, Psuedo intellectual Mexican General J., David, Serlo, the Corrupt judge Arne, Trig, are the examples of their corrupt mentality and monsters in the human shape. Silko calls them in the Native fashion as they are the products of witchery. The religious value of Christianity, justice and judicial system of government, department of police, are supposed to be the protective institutions
in the society. But the fact in American social system shown by the novelist is very grim and realistic. All these institutions have been raped and butchered by the combative avarice of Anglo Euro-American Individualism.

The base and backbone of every society is an individual. One can see how every individual is demoralised, family and marriage system is collapsed, the interpersonal relationship is rotten, male-female relationship at all the levels is collapsed. The characters like - Menardo, the Mexican Mix-blood, Iliana of European Lineage, Algeria and the Marxist Bartolome, Sonny Blue are the best representative examples of such kind of demoralised and decaying society. Due to the loss of moral values there are ample examples of sexual exploitation and drug addicts throughout the novel. One can see the effect of all these things in different characters. One of the characters is Leah, indifferent to her husband and sons, very much interested in extra marital sexual affairs. Her relationship with Trigg goes to an extent of sheer immorality and muckiness.

Another character Seese is drug addict. She is formerly a topless dancer in a sleazy night club where the girls are required to perform “bizarre sex acts for paying customers”. Later on she becomes David’s lover, unaware of the fact that he is merely using her to make Beaufrey jealous, as Beaufrey had used Eric to make
David jealous. Seese later on becomes psychic and becomes dependent on Lecha, a mix-blood, drug addict, T. V. Psychic, who can locate only dead people.

Male aggression on one part and female confusion on the other is also a type of tragedy in this novel. The Indian women are victimized and perverted by male aggression and oppression. Later on they become incapable of love. Zeta and Lecha, the twin sisters and putative protagonists of *Almanc of the Dead* are sexually molested by their uncle Federico throughout their childhood. Lecha is tricked into surrendering her virginity to him with the apparent complicity of the local priest. Neither woman ever lovers a man. Zeta has one sexual experience as an adult, to her compensation to the fat and stinking Mr. Coco for a job promotion, then chooses a life of celibacy. Like her, same another character Yoeme is the life time victim at the hands of white man named de-Guzman due to her grandmother.

Another important character in the novel is the revolutionary activist Angelita la Escapia who names her self as “The Meathook” has sex with men who are weaker than her, but cares only for overthrow of the globally destructive and evil avaricious institutions that characterize Euro-American males.
The whole novel is devoted to reveal the demoralized, decaying state of the society at various levels. The ultimate picture that the reader gets is of the erosion of human value, and human dignity. All this has happened due to the loss of bonds of natural, physical, and emotional level in the obsessive self-absorption which debases the individuals and institutions.

Throughout the novel women are portrayed as emotionally disturbed and victims of misogynistic, egocentric, European traditions. They are raped and degraded for centuries through oppression; women’s survival has come to depend upon their ability not to feel. This malevolence against mother in particular and women in general is figurative as well as literal. This type of male hostility metaphorically reflects the male contempt for the female earth. The earth is repeatedly referred to as the mother by various characters. Throughout the novel the word “rape” is applied uniformly to land and women. This is a kind of violation against humanity and nature. Yoeme, very explicitly calls it as the violation of the mother earth by the whites.

All this kind of barren, hopeless, and morally degraded socio-political and cultural system can not help an individual to survive safely. This is a sign of total destruction. As per the banished Laguna Indian woman, Sterling, it is old folk’s warning
of the terrible consequence of the brutal wounding of the mother earth. Therefore, it is highly important to protect the mother earth. This mission of the strong Indian Women Lecha, Zeta, Yeome and the warrior Angelita, is to reclaim the ravished and impoverished land to restore it to its place of respect. Angelita, a champion of the tribal rights to the earth laments the Euro-American failure to understand the earth as mother. To go away from the earth means to enter in the doom. So to save the earth is the ultimate motto of these active Indian women. The image of “mother earth” is a source of inspiration for the Native Women. It is a kind of positive note for the readers. One more message Silko wish as to spread through this novel is that “The Mother Earth” could be saved by the Indian people. All the destructive forces could indirectly be controlled. The images of water, as a source of life, the flowers the harbingers of renewed harvest, and fruit, the fulfilment of the flower’s premise are the signs of home. They stand against the monster self-absorbed characters. All these events are happening in Tucson, where Native Women came forward to save the system.

Leslie Mormon Silko as a creative artist has a vision through the ancestral past. Her characters are victim suffering in the present world, do not loose their hopes. They are hopeful about their ancestral world in order to attain salvation. It is the only
ultimate resolution left for them. Silko has strong belief in this regard. In all her literary work may be *Ceremony, Storyteller or Almanac of the Dead,* She portrays her past which is carefully reflected in her novels.

Silko, as a novels artist and staunch follower of Native Cultural traditions expresses her angst and anger against the white hegemony. The protagonists in her novels and other major characters are either confused or at the verge of destruction due to the colonial mentality of the whites. Tayo, the protagonist in the *Ceremony* faces mental illness due to white hegemony. He comes to the normal stage with the help of Shaman’s medicinal treatment and traditional practice of chanting, a psychological treatment. *Yellow Women* faces many psychological problems in *Storyteller* due to these whites. Most of the native characters in *Almanac of the Dead* are the victims of white approach of exploitation. Both the earth and the women are raped and treated very inhumanly. So, the world of Native American projected by Silko is under the shadow of dark cloud of colonial domination. The life style, their cultural traditions and customs are totally disturbed. They are paralysed by the white people in all sense. Due to such type of white domination they have lost their sense of originality and self identity. So, most of the characters expresses
their unhappiness and strong dislike towards the world of whites. Their main concern is not to live in this kind of world of torture and torments. They prefer to live in their own traditional world of ancestors. It is in fact, of reclaiming their own identity. To express strong kind of anger against the so called progressive materialistic world and to reclaim their own identity in the ‘ancestral’ world is the central theme of Silko’s literary work of art.
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CHAPTER: IV

NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES

In 1969, when Kiowa author N. Scott Momaday won the Pulitzer Prize for his first novel, *The House Made of Dawn*, (1968) the world noted literary quality of Native American writing and of the complexity of the Kiowa, Navajo and Pueblo oral mythological traditions that traces this contemporary fiction. Distinguished as one of the finest twentieth-century American novels, *The House Made of Dawn*, has been translated into Dutch, Italian, German, Swedish, Norwegian and Polish languages. Momaday’s *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (1969) into French, German, Italian and Japanese. Yet the long-range impact of Momaday’s literary contribution is hard to assess. It is not only because Momaday is still writing as a creative writer, but also became other Indian writers, whose imaginations and opportunities are still reflecting of songs and stories are yet to come.

Although known primarily for his impressive literary achievements including *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, N. Scott Momaday has also been recognized for his considerable artistic skills. His paintings and drawings have increasingly appeared
as an art cover on his books. The Ancient Child (1989) and the recent Sun Tracks/University of Arizona Press reprint edition of The Names: A Memoir (1976), and as dust jackets illustrations for books of criticism / interviews on his works, such as Kenneth Loemer’s (ed.) Approaches to teaching Momaday’s “The way to Rainy Mountain” (1988), Charles L. Woodard’s Ancestral Voice: Conversations with N. Scott Momaday (1989), and Joseph Bruchac’s Survival This Way: Interviews with American Indian Poets (1987). The imagery of Momaday’s artistic work focus the same themes that criss-crosses his poetry, fiction and expository writing. He has drawn tribal elders and ancestors, powerful symbolic shields, mad buffalo and meditative sitting bears, these images vibrantly suggest a personal quest for identity among his Kiowa people and his relationship to nature as articulated through art, ritual, and language. Momaday is interested in multiple ways of telling a story, and the storytelling tradition, a verbal phenomenon generated by a polyphonic interaction of human voices over millennia provides him with the primary symbols, structures and themes which he deftly transposes into literature. For Momaday, pictographs or painted rock images also tell stories that stretch into mythic time. In his second novel, The Ancient
*Child*, when the protagonist, Locke Setman, examines his own paintings he finds them:

Dark abstraction set in bright, whirling depths, mysterious, and profound as ancient rock paintings, beasts, and anthropomorphic forms proceeding from the far reaches of time.¹

These awesomely beautiful images express the confluence of Momaday’s historical, literary and artistic interests. For Momaday, an image of an Anasazi shield-bearer, for instance, may suggest a story in rock that has emerged from the distant past to speak meaningfully, however obliquely, to the modern world.

Given his love of visual images, it is not surprising that Momaday is reluctant to be known only as a writer. The corpus of Momaday’s work is significant because he insists on showing the life giving qualities of the arts and the inter-relationship of the arts to other components of tribal culture. Through his autobiography, fiction, poetry, painting and drawing, Momaday draws a Self-portrait of author as a bear; he re-creates an image of a primordial animal spirit whose ferocity and healing powers are legendary among diverse North American Indian tribes. The bear characterizes Momaday’s own precarious journey out of the open country of sweet grass and traditional Kiowa storytelling in the predominantly urban, “alien sphere” of American arts and letters.
Momaday’s abiding concern with the dilemma of a young Indian protagonist trying to maintain an unbroken link to the natural world and his/her community amid threats of conflict and violence from the dominant white culture.

In the tradition of Native American writers, Momaday was the first to significantly transform the novel into a narrative structure that is capable of generating healing energy through its embedded mythic patterns. The life-giving story, song and prayer texts that center *The House Made of Dawn* voices Navajo, Pueblo, and Kiowa beliefs about the continuously generated healing powers of natural world. The Navajo story patterns in particular which Momaday incorporates into *The House Made of Dawn*, tells of “Heroes” (from the twins in the origin myth to the healing ceremonial Nightway) or a “Heroine” (Elder Sister in the Mountainway chart) who are separated from family and home to venture out into a dangerous world. After suffering near-death experiences, they are ritually aided by the Holy People (deities) who bestow detailed ceremonial knowledge on them and restore them to a state of spiritual and physical health. Eventually the “heroes” are able to return home, remade in an image of beauty, order, and harmony.
The Navajo hero pattern is well suited to form the basis of *The House Made of Dawn’s* story line. Abel, the protagonist of the novel, experiences the grave difficulty of remaking his life in an image of holiness after he has been shattered by combat overseas during World War II and by confrontation with an evil, albino witchsnake figure upon returning home to Jemez Pueblo, New Mexico. Abel’s life parallels the Navajo hero’s journey into dangerous mythic space, and it is not until he is capable of surviving with dignity. The significance of bear as an embodiment of wilderness and healing energy is carried over into *The Ancient Child*, wherein the protagonist Set, it is actually possessed by bear and becomes the “reincarnation of the bear-the boy bear [Kiowa bearboy]” who figures prominently in Kiowa legend. As the ethnomusicologist David McAllester notes that “native empowerment is the theme” of *The Ancient Child* and this empowerment largely occurs through the presence of Bear.

N. Scott Momaday saw that American Indian fiction could be “deepened” to tell culturally meaningful stories from Native points of view by using indigenous modes of expression. Recognizing the novel as inherently flexible enough to accommodate portions of old stories from oral tradition, what is called as “Story herds”, Momaday let these mythic” fragments”
bleed into the fictional matrix of the text, becoming its lifeblood. Thus Momaday initiated the set up and many of the literary patterns for other Indian writers.

Leslie Marmon Silko in *Ceremony* has created a distinctive, original tale of young half-blood man’s search for wholeness and spiritual balance when he returns home from the Philippine jungles to Laguna Pueblo as a dislocated war veteran. One can recognize Momaday’s influence and contribution to the Silko’s text is threefold: First, Silko follows Momaday in modeling her protagonist’s life journey on ancient Pueblo and Navajo mythic hero patterns. Second, she does this, in parts, by paralleling Tayo’s contemporary story to the mythic stories of his people that tell of the origins of the world and of the strained relationship that existed between the earth people and the creative deities (e.g., Corn Woman) after the time of emergence from the underworlds. Because of tension or disharmonies between elements to the created world, it is necessary for heroic action to redress the imbalance. Tayo, *Ceremony’s* protagonist, then engages in positive actions that correct the patterns of misbehaviour around Laguna that have caused drought to grip the land. This theme of healing of both person and place, has been developed by Silko extensively in *Ceremony*. It is dominant in southwestern Native American oral
traditions, but was first elevated to significance in written literature by Momaday.

In the 1980s two important books appeared which focus on N. Scott Momaday’s work. First, Matthias Schubnell, a German scholar, published *N. Scott Momaday: The Cultural and Literary Background* (1985). This largely historical study traces the evolution and development of Momaday’s artistry predominantly in terms of his Euro-American influences, and helped to catapult Momaday further into the national and international literary limelight. Momaday’s first novel has been published as *Landmarks of Healing: A study of The House Made of Dawn* (1990). This critical study examines mythic patterns from Navajo, Pueblo, and Kiowa oral traditions, especially sacred stories about twins and bears. Momaday has transformed it in order to place his characters and readers into a symbolic relationship with the healing and regenerative powers of the natural world.

The novel tells the story of a young Jemez Pueblo man, Abel, who leaves home to fight in World War II. When he returns to the Pueblo in the mid-1940s, he is profoundly estranged from his culture. He is provoked to kill an albino, Pueblo man who appears to him as a witch snake rather than as a human being. After an affair with a white visitor to Jemez, Angela St.John, Abel is
relocated to Los Angeles prison where he spends some lost years. Upon Abel’s leaving prison, his new friends Milly and Ben Banally, a Navajo, attempt to help him pull his life together. But Abel is harassed by the slick Kiowa preacher-peyote road man Tosamah, and is drawn into a fight with the wicked cop Martinez, who brutally beats him almost to death. Ben and Angela appear in a Los Angeles hospital room to sing and encourage to bring Abel back from the edge of death. As Abel slowly mends, Ben sees him off on the Santa Fe train eastbound for Arizona and New Mexico. At the end of the novel, Abel returns home just in time to care for his dying grandfather Francisco. As Francisco’s spirit begins traveling to the other world, Abel runs on the snowy wagon road at dawn to reaffirm his ties with the land.

The structure of this novel is convoluted by Euro-American standards, but makes perfect sense when one considers that Momaday is deliberately trying to break up the planes of conventional narrative vision. It is in order to show that the world is informed by myth, by creating a circular, nonlinear narrative, replete with disjuncture and multiple storytelling voices. Momaday is trying to tell a complicated story, from several points of view and several tribal perspectives, in a way that is consistent with his understanding of the structures of oral tradition and the
cyclic nature of time. Momaday was the first Indian writer to end his novel as it began, with the image of a man running at dawn. The circularity of this affirmative scene, which expresses the potentiality of life at its fullest, is complemented by the novel’s four-part structure, which also conveys a sense of wholeness. Since ritual actions performed four times are considered complete, sacred, and effacious, Abel’s healing at the “end” of the novel is convincingly enacted. Silko’s novel *Ceremony*, published nearly a decade after *The House Made of Dawn*, likewise incorporates mythic structures and ritual patterns that provide a new angles of vision and perceptions about the unity of experience. When Silko frames her novel with the word “Sunrise”, like Momaday, Silko symbolically indicates that blessings are continuously being bestowed on the characters and the land.

Although many of the events and issues in *The House Made of Dawn* are cryptic, such as why Abel is fought out by both the albino and by Martinez. The surface events of the novel clearly show Abel to be a lost, alienated person with little family and seemingly few deep abiding ties to the land and community where he was raised. This socio-psychological dimension of the text is one of the themes upon which most serious criticism of *The House Made of Dawn* has been based. Actually, however, churning
beneath the surface of the plot, the eruptive deep structure of the novel suggests that Abel is inarticulate not only because he is muted by contact with the dominant white world, but also because he is a contemporary remanifestation of one of two maimed Navajo cultures. His brothers, the stricken twins, have suffered for having an unknown father and for having wandered off outside the boundaries or limits of culturally defined space. Vidal, Abel’s elder brother, is the other “twin reunification” takes place and a sense of wholeness is constituted.

There is considerable critical disagreement about the role of the character Angela in the novel. She is initially deceptive and cunning in her relationship with Abel. Through her intuitive knowledge of bear power and her identification with the Navajo mythological figure changing Bear Maiden and Bear Maiden, she comes to realize that her own former viciousness to Abel was inhumane. After this recognition, she becomes Abel’s nurturer and one of his healers.

In the last scene in The House Made of Dawn, Abel runs at dawn, even though he is injured. ‘He is no longer spiritually ill, as he has been thought by some early critics of the novel, such as Charles Larson. He saw the gesture as a death run’. Critic like Larry Evers, who in his “Words and Place” explains that language,
such as Abel’s singing of *The House Made of Dawn* prayer as he runs, acts to restore wholeness and inner harmony. Momaday has built upon mythic episodes recording in various ethnographic texts, in order to show that when images of the land are internalized in characters and human beings. It is through the repetition in song, prayer, and story. Spiritual transformation and physical healing occurs in the Story. A year before *The House Made of Dawn* was published, Momaday had hundred copies of *The Journey of Tai-me* (1967) privately hand printed in Santa Barbara. This slim volume became the prototype for a longer, more extended study of Kiowa oral traditions known as *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (1969). One of the attractions of *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, besides its brevity, is its unflinching clarity of vision. Comparing with all other Momaday works of most forthrightly it articulates the land and ethnic issue which has made him famous as a philosopher of environmental issue. Graced by pen-and -ink illustrations by Al Momaday, *The Way to Rainy Mountain* is N. Scott Momaday’s most popular book. From the first illustration of the bear rearing against the Devil’s Tower to the final illustration of the falling stars over a Kiowa encampment, this book, is a compilation of oral history and autobiography. It speaks eloquently of human relationships to specific landscapes. It is framed by the poems ‘Headwaters’ and ‘Rain Mountain
Cemetery’, the heart of the book begins with the prologue. The introduction conveys a sense of who the Kiowa people are. In three distinct narrative segments, the story is told of a long journey of the Kiowa’s over a span of three hundred years and a thousand miles from the headquarters of the Yellowstone. At present it is western Montana of the Southern Plains around Rainy Mountain, Oklahoma. Through these three sections, The Setting Out, The Going On, and The Closing In, the book charts the Kiowa migration beginning in the late 1600s and its culmination in a “golden age” between 1740 and 1830 when the horse culture was flourished. There was a rapid “decline” of the tribe in the beginning of 1833 until 1879. The Kiowa spiritual life, were essentially gone. “The Epilogue” dwells on the event of the falling stars. It heralds the decline of culture, but ends with the positive image of hundred-year-old woman Ko-Sahn, a living embodiment of tribal memory.

Momaday’s quest for identity, a major theme that runs through all his work, is expressed in The Way to Rainy Mountain in terms of another great theme, humanity’s relationship to the natural world. Part of the last passage in section XXIV reads:

Once in his life a man ought to concentrate his mind upon the remembered earth, I believe. He ought to give himself up to a
particular landscape in his experience, to look at it from as many angles as he can...4

This meditative writing, based on live experience in a given place, anticipates many of the co-writers such as Barry Lopez and Gretel Ehrlich who have tried through their own refined sensibilities to articulate a land of ethnic reciprocity that is viable for contemporary Americans.

Momaday’s trademark style precisely describes the minute details of animal’s life and the lay of the land, in “elevated” formal diction. Due to this he has earned the respect of a wide and diverse audience. Over the years Momaday has cultivated a distinctive narrative voice that is recognized orally for its deep resonance and vision, in print. Momaday finds wide “scope” and range and describes the grandeur and colourations of landforms in the shimmering distance. Momaday’s serious, often grave tone of voice lends an air of solemnity to his description of such places like the Washita River and the staked plains.

In many respects, the story of Momaday’s journey to retrace the paths of his ancestors is the story of the Kiowa’s’ relations with animals. Most of Al Momaday’s illustrations here are of animals, insects, horses, buffalos, bears, alligators, spiders and crickets. The other animals that figure prominently in *The Way to Rainy
Mountain are dogs, moles grasshoppers and various birds including red bird, bobwhite and peyote bird. Storm horse and peyote bird are the mythical creatures which figure in stories about creation and transformation. The sacred Sun Dance, Tai-me, manifest some of the most potent powers of the Kiowa cosmos. It is partly deer and partly bird, her body is a union of the powers of earth and sky. For Momaday, these animals and spiritual figures are, like his grandparents, Aho and Mommedaty, repositories of knowledge worthy of close attention.

The Names: A Memoir, which was published in 1976, is Momaday’s extended prose narrative account his personal genealogy, tribal heritage, and childhood experiences. Unlike The Way to Rainy Mountain, which is a collection of compact stories, almost vignettes, about his place in the history of the Kiowa people. The Names: A Memoir is a longer “documentary” piece about his place in the Kiowa life stream. The book is in three parts, mostly unpunctuated, nearly breathless recollection of impressive events that occurred to him as a little boy, told from the point of view of a child. The colloquial language here is appropriate for descriptions of the world as seen by a young person who may have been uncommonly observant and sensitive, but who had not yet developed into the famous writer with an oracular voice.
Replete with black-and-white photographs of family members and of significant places where he spent his childhood, Momaday’s book traces his immediate family’s personal history back, four generations before him, to his great-great-grandparents on both the sides. In typically Momaday fashion, for those for whom there is no photograph on the genealogical chart, he sketches facial portraits, consistent with the way that he imagines them to have hooked.

Momaday may not have been directly influential on Leslie Marmon Silko, but her *Storyteller*, published in 1981, bears a resemblance to *The Names: A Memoir*. In its broadest outlines, *Storyteller* is also composed of photographs and of stories from oral history about personal family tradition, but is expanded to includes original poetry and fiction, as well as lengthy retellings of traditional Keres mythology. Silko’s *Storyteller*, then, while loosely modeled on Momaday’s concept of autobiography, is really more like a synthesized compilation of both *The Way to Rainy Mountain* and *The Names: A memoir* in a decidedly rearranged Laguna woman’s context, laced together by Silko’s own narrative genius. Both Silko and Momaday hear and develop multiple storytelling voices as a way of opening up new possibilities for seeing who they are.
In some ways, as a number of critics have noted, Momaday seems to be telling the “same Story”, over and over again. The Ancient Child (1989) seems to bear this observation out. Early in the novel, half-Kiowa protagonist Locke Setman is described as a successful artist living in San Francisco. Yet he is deeply unsettled and easily disturbed. Barely aware of his Kiowa heritage Locke is summoned “home” to Oklahoma by a telegram that announces his “grandmother” Kope’ Mah’s impending death. The trip evokes memories of Locke’s troubled, orphaned childhood and thrusts him into a state of illness that is mitigated only by his growing curiosity about his identity. At his grandmother’s grave he feels out of place, and it is not until the young half-Kiowa, half –Navajo medicine woman Grey gives him a powerful medicine bundle that he begins to feel a bond with his ancestors and a hint of his personal bear power to come. This old Momaday theme of the healing power of Bear, which appeared in four bear stories in House Made of Dawn, appears even more pervasively in The Ancient Child. By the end of book one, Locke flashes back to his father’s story of the sudden appearance of a small boy in a Piegan camp. Since the little boy in some senses is said to be inarticulate and to transform into a bear, the boy becomes an archetypal model for Locke, who needs to define his identity, learns to feel at home in the wilderness.
The rest of the novel (Books Two through Four) is a working out of Locke’s wrestling with his self-images, his women, his artistic direction, his past, his dreams, his illness (which culminates in a mad scene in which he exposes the medicine bundle without proper ritual control), and his growing bear power. His life conforms to the monomythic hero pattern, already discussed in regard to Abel in *The House Made of Dawn*. As he begins to acknowledge the dual bear qualities of enemy and healer within him, he grows stronger and is more capable of love. By the time he has gone on a long journey through New Mexico, experienced the transformative slap of a bear paw on his throat, participated in a peyote ceremony, and witnessed a Navajo Yeibichai dance, he is ready for the epiphanal experience at Tsoai where his sense of smell grows acute as he becomes Bear.

*The Ancient Child* contains other elements such as the appearance of the legendary character Bill the kid and Set-Angya that stretch the scope of novel. Momaday is seriously playing with mythic materials in order to show that history reimagined becomes a cluster of stories that still resonates meaningfully into our contemporary time. Like his other work, *The Ancient Child* is heavily autobiographical and, although Momaday did not know
Set-Angya and Billy the kid in the flesh, he knows them intimately in his mind’s eye.

N. Scott Momaday has written in *The Names: A Memoir* “I have seen Grendel’s shadow on the walls of canyon de chilly…” Momaday is imaginatively oriented towards that place where myths intersect where the visual image becomes indistinguishable from the story that is being told as readers of Momaday’s collected works. One has to expect exquisite descriptions of landscape, especially of land forms seen by a plains man from a distance. The clean, exhilarating prose that distinguishes Momaday’s writing may ennable us because it allows us to take a fresh look at the world, at the time of creation. It is when everything is bursting with original transformative energy, enlarges a familiar vision with more high-quality illustrations and a new gathering of stories which are old emblems of personal power shields, that in their own swirling and symmetrical designs become images of the cosmos conceived in beauty.

Leslie Marmon Silko, born in 1948, is a member of the Laguna Pueblo tribe. She grows up at Laguna, attending high school in Albuquerque and then entering the University of New Mexico, after graduation. Then she decided to study law but changed to English. After joining the teaching profession she
taught at several colleges and universities before settling in Tucson, Arizona, where she is currently working on her net literary work and other Native American projects.

The publication of *Ceremony* in 1977 brought Silko’s writing to general public attention. Critics applauded the precisely crafted quality of the novel but generally sidestepped the implications of the fact that is distinguished as a novel by its innovative structural and stylistic adaptations to accommodate the dynamics of oral literature. Many attentive readers found themselves in accord with the poet James Wright’s expressed sense that Silko’s work brings us all into the presence of something truly remarkable.⁶

Like Wright, even enthusiastic readers and critic, found it difficult to specify the adjective “remarkable”. Wright himself continued his tribute to Silko by trying to characterize his reactions to *Ceremony*.

In some strange way it seems inadequate to call it a great book, though it is surely that, or a perfect work of art, though it is one. I could call *Ceremony* one of four or five best books I have ever read about America and I would be speaking the truth. But even this doesn’t say just what I mean. I think I am trying to say that my very life means more to me than it would have meant if you hadn’t written *Ceremony*. But this sounds inadequate also.⁷
The inadequacy that Wright and others felt so acutely was more than usual experience of humility in the presence of art. It included an awareness that language and its narrative realizations were working in ways that required an unusual slight shift away from responses conditioned by previous experiences of literature. While cultural differences were clearly implicated in this shifting, they could not entirely account for them. Since Silko’s work first reached general public notice, critics and teachers of American Indian literatures have continued the attempt to articulate some of what remains elusive about Silko’s art. A steady small stream of critical writing traces the development of an informed community of readers that is slowly growing beyond the defined perspectives of American Indian literatures. Silko’s place on American letters is enhanced by the fact that her short stories and poems can now be found in several anthologies of general American writings.

While the experience of art always exceeds the language of critics, the quality of Silko’s art allows for much richer and more exactly comprehensive interpretive specification than has yet been given to it. Part of difficulty in specifying dimensions of Silko’s style derives from the underdeveloped general academic understanding of cultural restraints within the epistemological presuppositions that guide so much literary criticism. Unrefined critical assumptions have
been most unquestioningly blatant in the criticism of oral narratives. Concentration on plot structures has so overshadowed attention to style and its capacity to accommodate different epistemological modes that cultural outsiders have appropriated American Indian materials while denying the vitality of a given community’s adaptations of their own traditions. This stance focused Silko’s anger and occasioned one of her rare critical essays, entitled kind of as ‘An Old-time Indian Attack’, written in the late 1970s. Her infrequent critical writings often include more or less direct expressions of similar frustrations over writing about Native American people which unself-consciously imposes an outsider’s judgement on an insider’s experience. As they perpetuate the limitations of their own confusions about how culture curtails assumptions of universal processes, literary critics fall into what Silko has called “one way knowing”. In several published interviews, she has identified herself as fundamentally, experimentally, and very consciously “two-way,” relationship in her writing. Some configurations, though, are more basic than others.

Perhaps the most important relationship in Silko’s writing exists between individual expression and cultural narrative. Or, to put it in terms that Silko herself uses, the crucial relationship is the one between listener and storyteller. This quickly calls to mind
another interaction existing on an entirely different analytic level, that between oral-storytelling and the modern novel. For Silko the two are intimately interactive in ways that had little or no precedent in world literature. Silko’s in particular concentrates on the relationship between listener and storyteller as a fundamental nexus of choice and imaginative growth, always endangered from without by lies and from within by psychic objection, brings readers to an unusually intense awareness of origins and artistic foundations. She herself expressed the essence of relationship simply and directly in one of her letters to James Wright, noting analogies in the immediate emotional intensity that the visual arts evoke in sensitive viewers:

Even on the post-card I can appreciate the vitality in Vermeer’s paintings and how alive they remain by bringing something seldom touched in ourselves. Alive too—life-giving process, as with the listeners who make it possible for the storyteller to go on.8

All of Silko’s writing is an extended, imagistically realized commentary on how listening and storytelling can be life-giving processes. They are the essential dynamics of a way of knowing, an epistemological process that allows us to glimpse images and narratives and generative factors within the developmental trajectory of a person’s psycholinguistic growth. The crucial
implications of the previous statement that constitute interactions between individual subjectivity, cultural presuppositions, and their narrative realizations are dramatized in Silko’s work. One stanza from the initial poetic sequence in *Ceremony* has achieved epigrammatic force as a banner line for Silko’s writing and, by extension for the entire field of Native American literature: “You don’t have anything / if you don’t have the stories.”

Silko’s sense of story encompasses the entire dynamic of culturally specific symbolic interaction with brief narrative serving as dramatic distillations of larger symbolic and semiological process. Distinctive narratives are responses to situations, symbolic dosages, prescribed for the event of the moment. Stories in the broad sense in which Silko uses the term, so broad that gossip is an integral part of the story’s process, and creates the bond between subject and society. The verb “create” carries extraordinary weight in reference to Silko’s work because of her bond that is always fragile. She concentrates on moments when it is threatened and renewed. Her sense of story is not so broad, though, it universalizes the process at any but the most abstract levels. Specific cultures teach their own ways of relating to stories. This culturally defined interpretive dimension, always dependent on a living, interpreting community, is a boundary-determining
factor that Silko, incorporates into her plots, her style, and even the structure of her works. The pervasiveness of this boundary means that it defies simple characterizations of its functions. Her short stories allow us to glimpse the main features of the dynamic process of Silko’s sense of story, a process which becomes considerably more complicated in the novel *Ceremony*.

*Storyteller* is a tale about traditional knowing and acting that incorporates the most basic elements of Silko’s art, the motifs found in all other stories and even in many of the poems. The central character, a young Yupik woman, claims to have killed a white man in order to avenge the murder of her parents. The State troopers tell her that all circumstances of the case point to the impossibility of her having murdered the man. Yet she insists what she did. The story tells how and why the event happened. It provides us a glimpse and generates consciousness about American Indians and creates a desire to read. The girl’s parents were murdered by those who take whatever they want with no regard for person or community, so she turns that unconstrained desire against the man who killed her parents. The *Storyteller* dramatizes positive desire too and links it to narrative dynamics. Desire springs from the pre-linguistic anteriority of instinct seeking objects of need. Reflected and refracted through symbolic
articulation, it becomes a force for community and continuity, always reaching toward the future. This fundamental human condition of need animates the plot of *Storyteller* so directly that the actual plot seems only a thin but impenetrable membrane separating us from the inner functions of desire. Yet the verbal materiality of that membrane incorporates the distance of cultures as well as the inevitable distance imposed by any structured realization of prelinguistic need.

Two elements of this short story recur throughout Silko’s work and constitute thematic constellations. One is an emphasis on telling a story in exact detail, avoiding shortcuts. Silko gives this theme a stylistic emphasis that verges on the uncanny characters in the story must live the story. The effect of it is that their actions obey a retroactive anteriority. The teleological becomes immediate motivations, an opaque yet urgent guide to choices. Critical language can state the outlines of temporality implicit in this sacred worldview. The immediate experience of Silko’s style can turn it into narrative tension and make the “warnings” work artistically. That tension is fed by Silko’s references to getting the smallest details of the stories right and by her own skill in achieving the exactness in writing that her dying character strives for in his
tales. In *Storyteller*, a dying old man passionately recounts the story of a bear that he must chase to death.

The old man would not change the story even when he knew the end was approaching. Lies could not stop what was coming. He thrashed around on the bed, pulling the blankets loose, knocking the bundles of dried fish and meat on the floor.9

Getting the details right requires an alertness that is the result of disciplined training achieved through listening to stories. This introduces the second thematic element implicit in all of Silko’s work, the emphasis on feeling. For Silko, feeling takes on unique ramifications that are from its general mass-media connotations. In Silko’s work, feeling is disciplined desire. In *Storyteller*, the young woman experiences the old man’s passion through sex, but more than that, she listens to him transfer it to the exacting language of his story and she learns how to stay alert, feeling her way through observation and story into what still lies in the future.

She could feel the silence the story left, and she wanted to have the old woman go on…. These preparations were unfamiliar, but gradually she recognized them as she did her own footprints in the snow.10
By learning to understand feeling in relation to exact observation of all the conditions surrounding it, the young woman loves the white man to his death, feeding his sexual passions and then making him chase her across the ice of the Bering Sea in the spots where she knows it is weak.

They asked her again, what happened of the man from the Northern Commercial store. ‘He lied to them. He told them it was safe to drink. But I will not lie’. She stood up and put on the gray wolf skin parka, ‘I killed him;’ she said, ‘but I don’t lie.’

For Silko, the relationship between storyteller and listener is a maternal matter what ever the biological sex of the participants may be. Themes of maternity are realized within a rich constellation of images and plot transformations. An underlying cultural consideration must be the fact that Laguna Pueblo is a matriarchal culture. The Pueblo, existing within its symbolically invested landscape is a mother who has been mistreated and misunderstood by the colonizers. This socio-historical context colours our awareness of Silko’s passionate maternal figures, whom blonde social workers quickly label as unfit mothers in total disregard for the enormous nurturing capability these characters possess. The story ‘Lullaby’ reveals the essential line of the maternal themes in Silko’s writing to date.
Silko’s signature opening move, the use of nature descriptions to refer to psychological and cosmic temporality, sets the tone of ‘Lullaby’ in immediate sharp contrast to the title: ‘The sun had gone down but the snow in the wind gave off its own light’. Ayah, the mother in this story and ‘her life becomes memories’. Her warmth in winter comes from a wool army blanket that had once belonged to her son who is killed in military action. But if her blanket is literally a faded, revealed connection to a lost son, memory connects it to an entire material tradition of weaving things of beauty. The swift, sure, direct connection that Silko makes between the blanket, as object and it is remembered as connections between herself and her son. It is a superb example of her ability to achieve the connotative mimesis that is characteristic of her art:

Ayah pulled the old Army blanket over her head like a shawl. Jimmie’s blanket the one he had sent to her. That was a long time ago and the green wool was faded, and it was unraveling on the edges. She did not want to think about Jimmie. So she thought about the weaving and the way her mother had done it.

After precise evocation of the details of weaving, Silko moves from memory to immediate physical sensations. This use of physical
sensation to make the body a living, feeling, responsive embodiment of memorized story is a basic to Silko’s style:

She felt peaceful remembering. She didn’t feel cold any more. Jimmie’s blanket seemed warmer than it had ever been. And she could remember the morning he was born.¹⁵

If the blanket can bestow warmth through its maternal associations, the continuity and progression of the same associations reverses everything. The reversal of birth is not death. It is severed nurturing. The ‘Lullaby’ cuts off before his needs are over. It is maternal gesture used as a betrayal of the maternal. First there is the disappearance of Jimmie:

It wasn’t like Jimmie died. He just never came back and one day a dark blue sedan with white writing on its doors pulled up on front of the boxcar shack where the rancher let the Indians live.¹⁶

Then comes the event that chokes off the Lullaby. Ayah cannot read white writing. She loses her children because of it. Believing that by signing her name, she can save her children, she actually gives them up to the care of social workers. All that had once evoked maternal care now causes the recoil, a twist inward to unbearable pain (Silko’s text sets up and uses the poly-valence of the word “bear”):
She did not sleep for a long time after they took her children. She stayed on the hill where they had fled the first time, and she slept rolled up in the blanket Jimmie had sent her. She carried the pain in her belly and it was fed by everything she saw… the pain filled her stomach and there was no room for food or for her lungs to fill with air. The air and the food would have been theirs.\textsuperscript{17}

But if her belly is full of pain stems from being unable to read white writing, Ayah knows how to read human need and she can respond to it with courageous clarity. After the loss of her children, she hates her husband:

“Because he had taught her to sign her name. Because it was like the old ones always told her about learning their language or any of their ways: it endangered you.”\textsuperscript{18}

Years later, though, when her husband is sick, his shivering becomes a sign of a need that she understands profoundly. She knows that ‘Only her body could keep him warm’.\textsuperscript{19} And she returns to nurturing maternity.

As the story progresses, we learn that only her body can bear him to his own peaceful death. She knows all the signs of land can bear him to this transitional sleep with words of loving parental care and togetherness:
She tucked the blanket around him, remembering how it was when Ella had been with her; and she felt the rush so big inside her heart for the babies. And she sang the only song she knew to sing for the babies. 

That exquisitely tender reading of the story’s ending, thought, co-exists with another, and much of the story’s significance derives from the disparity between alternative readings. The other account of the ending that the tale requires us to see that which shows a wife murdering her sick husband by getting him drunk and then watching and singing while he freezes in the cold. Even if readers ascribe to the tender and positive ending so carefully established by the style of the story, they have to remember that the law would lean toward the other interpretation. Silko explicitly situates her writing amid conflicting interpretations that depend to a large degree but never entirely on cultural perspectives. Tony’s Story is another story that expands this aspect of Silko’s work.

Silko’s writing achieves moments when images are flush with the energy of origins. Birth and death are bound together with an intensity few writers achieve:

I knelt above you
that morning
I counted the rattles
the last whistles
in your throat.
I put my mouth on yours
I might have been possible then
except you clenched your teeth
I could not push through
with my breath or my fingers.

I saw how you would go
spilling out
between ivory ribs
seeping under the tall gate
where earth sucked you in
like rainwater.21

Her stories dramatize how desire, need, and sexuality are all variations of the same psychic dynamics feeding the well springs of life, consciousness and culture. Silko brings readers close to the moments when sexuality and storytelling participate in the same gestures of becoming. She does it with startling directness and a simplicity that makes James Wright’s choice of a Vermeer postcard so appropriate a response to Silko’s own artistic genius. Sexual intimacy that is not just connection to another human being but it is also a transgressive and augmentative relationship to an organically developing tradition is dramatized in the short story ‘Yellow Woman’.

A married woman and man, strangers who meet by the river, understand their sexual attraction in terms of the old legends about the abduction of ‘Yellow Woman’. In Silko’s story, the
compulsive precariousness of overwhelming sexual attraction becomes precisely analogous to the risks of seeking meaning outside the already given constraints of the symbolic. But if such meaning is still outside the communally encompassed tradition, it is so, not by virtue of any essential antagonism but simply because it is a new development that may or may not become part of the tradition. The tentativeness of this development provokes a tension which Silko persistently evokes, touching as it does on the birthing passage from individual experience to cultural resource:

But I only said that you were him and that I was Yellow Woman—I’m not really her—I have my own name and I come from the Pueblo on the other side of mesa. But I didn’t go on; I felt him all around me, pushing me down into the white river sand.... All I could be known was the way he felt, warm damp, his body
beside me. This is the way it happens in the stories, I was thinking, with no thought beyond the moment she meet the Ka’tsina spirit and they go.\textsuperscript{23}

If the characters question, the overall development of the story resolves the questioning affirmatively, so that we finally understand the narrative as an evocation in story form of the dynamics of legend formation. Readers are immersed in the experiential immediacies underlying legend formation which charts the path from instinctual desire to impetuous risk to new meaning that can, in its turn, be passed on through added legends that link old and new initiate further seeking, subsequent returns to ordinary experiences. The images of individuals seeking each other in desire and hope, tracing each other’s footsteps along the sands of a river where individuals have traced similar quests, are directly realized from the very first words of the story:

My thigh clung to his with dampness, and I watched the sun rising up through the tamaracks and willows… I felt hungry and followed the river south the way we had come the afternoon before, following our footprints that were already blurred by lizard tracks and bug trails…I walked north with the river again, and the white sand broke loose on footprints over footprints.\textsuperscript{24}
In 1981, Silko published a collection of stories and poems called *Storyteller*. Previously published short stories and poems become part of a new whole as they are interwoven with autobiographical commentaries revealing formative influences in Silko’s personal and artistic development. The revelation here is never exhaustive or even exact. It shimmers as suggestion that is enhanced by the fact that so much of the personal reminiscence is presented in verse form, giving the added meaning and ambiguity of poetic rhythms. Every item takes on added significance from what surrounds it. The settings for the stories, poems, and reminiscences include photographs which function less as illustrations than as incentives to another kind of contemplation. While working on the book, Silko wrote to James Wright:

I am interested now in the memory and imagination of mine which come out of these photographs maybe I am more affected by what I see than I had heretofore realized. Strange to think that you heard something— that you heard someone describe a place or a scene when, in fact you saw so oblivious— this is what makes a poet a poet and not a painter or photographer.²⁵

*Storyteller* belongs with that small collection of books in world literature that are structurally adapted explicitly in order to illustrate the developmental interrelationships between
individuals and a living tradition. This book, to date, has received minimal attention from critics, perhaps because of general inattentiveness to psycho-linguistic ramifications of living oral traditions. This oversight seems to have blinded critics to the significance of the style of *Storyteller* which is so bound up with the dynamics of oral transmission and their educative process. Traditional learning, properly guided, is timed to correspond with major and minor transitional events in a person’s developmental trajectory, and the autobiographical sections of *Storyteller*. The workings of such learning as almost no other work of literature does. Traditional transmission of narrative is intimately relational. In a way that no relationship other than maternal approach *Storyteller* celebrates that intimacy.

Poems are a crucial part of *Storyteller* and correspond to the way poems work to structure the novel *Ceremony*. A sure sense of rhythm governs them. Rhythm harnesses the emotions implicit in basic gestures realized within a context where similar gestures can evoke a connotative history. Frequently Silko explicitly links intimately described gesture to tradition with brief references of stories. Other poems are predominantly narrative with a clear, controlled dramatic time presented in terms of its emotional efflorescence. Synthesis is often used to present the connotative
force of environment in relation to action. In *Storyteller* and in *Ceremony*, the poems function to set past and present in emotional relationship to each other so that the affective structuring and channeling that the stories achieved in the past can achieve their interpretive role in the present.

In the novel *Ceremony* all the themes, images, and characteristic moves found in Silko’s other writing take an added meaning. They become complicated by the way issues of cultural change and contact intrude upon their development. These issues affect more than just the content. They pose a more fundamental tension that informs narrative and poetic rhythms as they are modulated by structure and orchestrated through the micro-elements of style. *Ceremony* is so precisely crafted a novel that analogies to the plastic or musical arts come to mind with an appropriate critical case. Any given thematic strand can be traced from beginning to end in its connections to all others, and the fundamental strands can be followed back into the short stories and poems. Emphasis is on crafted precision, the way the novel shatters contemplative securities. The novel is much more than a celebration of recovered mythic meaning; it dramatizes the excruciating precariousness of such recovery while simultaneously valorizing it.
The character Tayo is a man attuned to the ways knowing taught through the old stories. From his uncle Josiah and from the woman such feeling leads directly to action. Tayo is trapped in situations where the logic of action contradicts feeling. A World War II veteran supposedly suffering from shell shock, Tayo is really a victim of feeling (as Silko uses the word) severed from action, and like Ayah in ‘Lullaby’ his capacity to feel his way into appropriate action is turned painfully in words:

He shivered because all the facts, all the reasons made no difference any more; he could hear Rocky’s words, and he could follow the logic of what Rocky said, but he could not feel anything except a swelling in his belly, a great swollen grief that was pushing into his throat.26

Tayo’s way of feeling the stories leaves him a shivering wreck of man because the interpretive dynamics are so basic to Silko’s sense of storytelling are out of balance not only for Tayo but for the entire culture. Therein lies the peculiarly modern force of the novel. A healer tells Tayo:

There are something’s we can’t cure like we used to,’ he said,’ not since the white people came’… he pulled the blue wool cap over his ears. ‘I’m afraid of what will happen to all of us if you and the others don’t get well,’ he said.27
Tayo’s response indicates Silko’s way of switching reference away from simple social concerns and into more comprehensive matters of mind, spirit and story:

The old man only made him certain of something he had feared all along, something in the old stories. 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.28

Tayo needs communal interpretation of what is happening to him. Only such externalized understanding can grant him the truth of what he feels and gives him a way to turn the feeling of action. For Silko, the more outward to community is always the moment of idealogical stress. An oppressive history has complicated that move and Silko’s writing reveals the impact of that oppression. But the subject’s need for communal reference is more fundamental than political history, which she consistently presents as a passing, superficial although dangerous phenomenon. Any subjectivity which separates itself emotionally and referentially from living community is, for Silko, even more deadly than isolated political acts, and in Silko’s writing such separation is linked to witchcraft.

Artistic reference not only binds but also bridges the way from individual emotion to communal possibility. It is relational.
The most fundamental artistic references are ceremonial. Without ceremonial participation the people lose their communal references.

The sensitivity remained; the ability to feel what the others were feeling in the belly and chest; words were not necessary. But the messages the people felt were confused now.29

With the novel *Ceremony* Silko addresses the formation of an interpretive community appropriate to the twentieth century. She presents the right teachers, men and women who are “different”; one such person is a Mexican dancer. She tells Tayo;

They are afraid, Tayo. They feel something happening, they can see something happening around them and it scares them. Indians, Mexicans or whites-most people are afraid of change. They think that if their children have the same color of skin, the same color of eyes that nothing is changing.’ She laughed softly, “They are fools. They blame us, the ones who look different. That way they don’t have to think about what has happened inside themselves.30

Silko’s envisioned new interpretive community, while profoundly traditional, incorporates global understanding in order to keep the traditional, story processes alive. It explicitly requires multicultural knowing (and not just “knowledge,” which implies already posited structurations):
This is the only way,’ she told him. ‘It cannot be done alone. We must have power from everywhere. Even the power we can get from the whites’.31

The feelings which are the instinct for the story formation are stylistically essential to the development of Ceremony. All the transition between old and new, mythic and prophetic, sacred and secular, local and global, disease and health, solitude and community, require characters to feeling their way into the right course of action:

He did not expect to find Josiah’s cattle near Herefords, because the spotted cattle were so angry and wild; but without Betonie he wouldn’t have hoped to find the cattle at all… so he had gone, not expecting to find anything more than the winter constellation in the north sky overhead; but suddenly Betonie’s vision was story he could feel happening-from the stars and the woman, the mountain and the cattle would come.32

The enduring characters in Ceremony, like the cattle they raise for a livelihood, have indelible homing instinct, and they are tough, able to survive that would kill others. These are the people strong enough to “feel” the story. They create transitions that take characters and readers into the future and presage the future of Silko’s own writing as well as the learning that the world in
general seeks as it struggles toward a more knowing multiculturalism.

Silko’s fascination with story has also led to experimentation with film. “Film,” says Silko:

Is a way of seeking very like the oral tradition. It operates on a highly refined, simultaneous, personal level. It makes one aware of the visual signals in the language and helps me realize a way of seeing, of organizing as a whole instead of through fragments of experience. Film gives the feeling that we get going for a walk, experiencing many things at once in a simple, elemental way.33

Presenting the simple and elemental with enough technical know how and skill that the aura of retained enigmas continues to surround the simple is Silko’s talent. The enigmatic quality of all Silko’s writing continues to beckon as audiences and readers move into interpretations that reveals and conceals simultaneously.

*Almanac of the Dead* brilliantly grapples with just such questions, spinning tale after sanguinary tale with a vengeance. This wild, jarring, graphic, mordant, prodigious book embodies the bold wish to encompass in a novel the cruelty of contemporary America, a nation founded on the murder and decarnation of the continent’s native people.
Like the ancient almanac itself, Silko’s novel is a book with a vision. It is a vision of the possibility of retaking of old lands and of re-establishing the old way of seeing and living. It is a kind of return to the ancestral world. It is not an individual but the representative wish of all the Native Americans.

Native American writers have established their uniqueness on the basis of their creative writing. Their rich ancestral past and the oral tradition is the source of their imagination. The tribal heritage, cultural richness and ritual patterns with the freshness of their own style of writing proves their distinctness from the Euro-American literary pattern. Most of the Native Americans are loaded with their first hand experience from the nature and the beauty of the landscapes which nurtures their creative faculty. At the same time all these writers lament on the European invasion of their motherland and the cruel behaviour of these people. The technological advancement and the luxurious life of these colonizers can not make them to forget their past which is full of blood and tears. This haunting-past reminds them the destruction of the rich socio-political and cultural heritage by the colonizers. So, instead of living in this kind of world which has its moorings
on the exploitation of their own people can not give them any kind of happiness. Although these writers are settled in the cities in America and living a life of assimilation with the mainstream people, their inner urge is to return back to their ancestral world, which is an ideal world for them. The loss of inheritance and the type of angst regarding cultural loss is expressed by these writers in their writings. Writing is a kind of sacred work for the Native Americans. It stands very equal to the spiritual and religious power. Most of the writers seek a type of peace and solace in it. These writers use their oral traditions as a primary source of their language, style of expression and the sense of wholeness.

Different type of dances, ceremonies, seasonal festivals and the indigenous models of expression are the integral part of their literature. As the Native Americans and their ancestors had close association with nature one can find how the flaura and fauna constitutes oneness with them. All the plants, insects, birds, animals, mountains and valleys are not only the physical inanimity but have a special type of live role to play with them. They have their own language and the characters can speak with them.
Sometimes these plants and animals are the source of spiritual power for them. Writers like N. Scott Momaday has a strong feeling that Bear is the source of spiritual power for him. Momaday throughout his work of art expressed Bear as a spiritual strength and revealed that he has a kind of strong bond with it. Some times he says bear and himself are inseparable. Similarly some birds like-red bird, bobwhite peyote and Eagle are mythical creatures for him.

Same thing is applicable to Leslie Marmon Silko; animate and inanimate world plays vital role in her writing. Spiritual power, mythological creatures and traditionally important places constitute an integral part of her writing. In the novel *Ceremony* when all the European medicines and the hospitals fail to treat Tayo’s illness, the shaman Betony treats and cures him on the basis of chanting and using traditional medicines. At the same time in the novel *The Ancient Child* Momaday portrays a the character like Setman Lockie who gets name, fame and recognition as an artist in the American society except satisfaction, so ultimately he has to go to Grey woman, and with
the help of medicine bundle given by her he returns back to the ancestral world. He succeeds in getting happiness and satisfaction. Such type of things are very fresh and newly added in the American literary tradition. The animal imagery, tribal oriented myths, and the speciality of using the European language in their own fashion proves their separate status in the field of literature. By winning the prestigious Pulitzer Prize Momaday has added feather in the crown of American Indian writing. The translations in Italian, German, Japanese, Russian and many other languages are the solid proof about the Native American Literature on the global scale.

The Native American writers use their own type of narrative strategies, which are deeply rooted in their own folk culture and storytelling.

N. Scott Momaday, a product of Pueblo-Navajo and Kiowa traditions and cultures uses multiple storytelling voices in the novel *The House Made of Dawn*. The use of non-linear, circular narrative technique is unique in itself. He ends the novel where it began. The protagonist is in running action with a song.
of ‘The House Made of Dawn’. The four-part structure about his place in Kiowa life stream is the main theme of this book. N. Scott Momaday conveys this theme to the reader in a very artistic manner.

In *The Ancient Child*, Momaday portrays Locke Setman, as a protagonist, who is living in Sanfransico. As an artist, Momaday is successful in portraying the Native American artist in the world of white domination. But to be successful in such kind of society doesn’t mean to be happy and contended. Momaday conveys this message to the readers. The success of N. Scott Momaday’s narrative technique lies in his understanding of realistic past. Throughout his writing the history of the novel conveys the sense of wholeness.

Momaday has used the sense of racial memory to recollect the past of his family history. In *The Way to Rainy Mountain* he portrays the physical as well as spiritual journey of his Kiowa people. Their close association with the nature, animal and plains and mountains has great significance in the Kiowa life. The writer gives all the minute details of their manifold journey.
in beautiful language. *The Names: A Memoir* is also full of autobiographical elements. The writer is successful in giving a detail family history to the readers. The extended prose narrative account for his personal geneology with the tribal heritage and childhood experiences. It is re-imagined to create the cluster of stories which resonate meaningfully into our contemporary time.

Leslie Marmon Silko as a writer and real follower of Keresan language is always in search of a story which has its roots in her Pueblo culture. Her short stories, poems and novels are deeply rooted in cultural sense. The narrative techniques used by her are the product of this kind of understanding.

In the *Ceremony*, Silko has created a character like Tayo, who is the product of white dominated world. All his confusions, his participation in the world war and the illness to which he had to face are the product of the same world. Silko as a writer and follower of the Native American tradition portrays her character to follow the Euro-American medicine. But ultimately Tayo gets relief from the traditional medicine
of Shaman and his chanting. The whole story is narrated in the form of Native American style. The novel is framed with the word ‘Sunrise’, which indicates the blessings bestowed on the characters and the land. The mythic structure, ritual pattern provides a new angle of vision and perception about the unity of experience.

In the *Storyteller*, Silko uses various elements of poetry, fiction and photographs as a part of her narrative techniques. All these things are used to recollect the past and freeze it into the immortal linguistic organs so as to convey the message of the past and rich heritage of the Native Americans.

Throughout the book one can easily understand how Silko is representing the Laguna Pueblo matriarchal culture; it is a mother who has been misunderstood and exploited by the colonizers. The writer condemns this type of European approach towards Native American nature and people. Silko’s narrative technique has strong roots in the socio-historical context which aims at awakening the maternal awareness in the reader.