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Tradition and Narrative Form in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*

Claire Keyes

Summary

The story of her male protagonist's transformation into a heroic figure drives Leslie Marmon Silko's novel *Ceremony* (1977). His struggle exists within the context of the feminine principle and in a world created by "Thought-Woman", an American Indian mythic figure. Ts'eh Montano, the woman who becomes Tayo's lover, represents the feminine principle; in loving Tayo she leads him to a recognition of female power or the power-to-transform. This feminist reading of *Ceremony* intersects with Silko's use of the traditional stories of her tribe - the Laguna/Keres of New Mexico, in particular the Yellow Woman stories of the Pueblo oral tradition. Silko's own story, "Yellow Woman", provides a useful template in understanding the lineaments of *Ceremony*. In creating her novel, Silko's impulse is, therefore, both feminist and tribal and she maintains a strong belief in the tribal stories. Like other American Indian writers, Silko roots her aesthetics in the oral tradition. She engages her readers in an act of remembering her earlier story, thus involving us in the creation of her narrative universe.

Opsomming

Die verhaal van transformasie van die hooffiguur in 'n heldefiguur in Leslie Marmon Silko se roman *Ceremony* (1977), is die dryfveer agter hierdie roman. Sy stryd is vervat in die konteks van die vroulike beginsel en in 'n wêreld geskep deur "Thought-Woman" 'n Amerikaanse Indiaanse mitiese figuur. Ts'eh Montano, die vrou wat Tayo se minnares word, verteenwoordig die vroulike beginsel; deur Tayo te bemin lei sy hom tot die herkenning van die vroulike krag van die krag om-te-transformeer ("power-to-transform"). Hierdie feministiese lees van *Ceremony* vorm 'n kruispunt met Silko se gebruik van die tradisionele verhale van haar stam - die Laguna/Keres van New Mexico, in besonder die "Yellow Woman" - verhale van die Pueblo mondelinge tradisie. Silko se eie verhaal, "Yellow Woman", dien as nuttige profielvorm om die trekke van *Ceremony* te verstaan. Silko se stukrag in *Ceremony* is dus feministies en stamgebonde en sy handhaaf 'n sterk oortuiging ten opsigte van die stamverhale. Soos ander Amerikaanse Indiaanse skrywers, is Silko se estetika in die mondelinge tradisie gewortel. Sy betrek haar lesers in die herinnering aan haar vroeëre verhaal, waardeur hulle betrek word in die skepping van haar narratiewe wêreld.

In *Ceremony* (1977) the love affair that Leslie Marmon Silko creates for her American Indian hero, Tayo, changes his life. While his relationship with the mountain woman, Ts'eh Montano, is pivotal to his personal transformation, its ramifications extend to his Pueblo Indian tribe. At the beginning of the novel he is a broken-down, alcoholic veteran just home from the Pacific War. Only he's not "home", not centered or at peace in the tribal environment. He's ravaged by the memory of his war experiences and his family doesn't know what to do with him. Tormented, in particular, by the war-death of his cousin Rocky, he's incapable of being part of the family or the surrounding tribe. By the end of the novel, however, having undergone the curing "ceremony", Tayo finds purpose to his life. He has retrieved his uncle's cattle and thus has an occupation for himself. More importantly, he has re-established his tribal bonds. With his transformation into a heroic figure, he also revives the hopes of his people. The story of his transformation drives Silko's novel. Many factors contribute to it; among them, Ts'eh Montano's role is crucial. Loving him, she impresses on him the power of story, a power capable of defeating the witchery, the antagonistic force in the novel.

While Silko builds her novel around the struggles of a male hero, he exists within the context of the feminine principle and in a world created by "Thought-Woman". Paula Gunn Allen calls *Ceremony* "a tale of two forces: the feminine life force of the universe and the mechanistic death force of the witchery". In this conflict, Tayo is the central human character, but

> [t]here is not a symbol in [*Ceremony*] that is not in some way connected with womanness, that does not in some way relate back to Ts'eh and through her to the universal feminine principle of creation: Ts'its'tsi'nako, Thought Woman, Grandmother Spider, Old Spider Woman.
>
> (Allen 1986: 119)

Silko names her character Ts'eh to echo the first syllable of Thought Woman's Indian name; subliminally, we make the connection she wants. Likewise, Ts'eh as a name recalls the name of the significant mountain in the novel, Mount Taylor, "called Tse-pi'na in Laguna (Woman Veiled in Clouds) ..." (Allen 1986: 121).

The presence of Ts'eh and other strong female characters plus the pervasiveness of the feminine principle make a feminist reading of the novel congruent with the presence of a male hero. He needs to be "saved"; his salvation lies in recognizing the power of the feminine principle. In other words, contemporary feminist notions of female power as the "power-to-transform" (Keyes 1986: 6) find much to savor in Silko's narrative universe.

Along with the presence of recognisably feminist motifs in *Ceremony*, Silko's

narrative depends upon her use of the traditional stories of her tribe - the Laguna/Keres of New Mexico. Chiefly, it helps to know and remember Silko's earlier story, "Yellow Woman", first published in 1974. In creating the character of Ts'eh Montano, Silko draws upon her own short story and, by extension, upon the Yellow Woman stories in the Pueblo oral tradition. In effect, narrative in *Ceremony* depends on the principle of intertextuality, which is, "for Indians" the "use of tradition" (Allen 1989: 21).

The Yellow Woman stories come from the oral tradition of the Keres/Laguna tribe of New Mexico, Silko's tribe. She tells us, "I grew up at Laguna Pueblo. I am of mixed-blood ancestry, but what I know is Laguna. This place I am from is everything I am as a writer and human being" (Silko 1974: 176). Clearly, Silko's American Indian heritage both structured her personality and nurtured her storytelling abilities. In fact, the publication of *Ceremony* was followed in 1981 by a volume entitled *Storyteller* (1981) which might be regarded as a tribal autobiography. A collection of legends, poetry and Silko's own fiction, including a section devoted to Yellow Woman stories, this volume also includes photographs by Lee Marmon, Silko's father. *Storyteller* gives credit to those women who influenced Silko as a storyteller/writer. Melody Graulich points out: "Growing up in a close community of powerful, creative, and hard-working women like Aunt Susie and Grandma A'mooh ... helped [Silko] find her voice as a storyteller, part of the ongoing tradition" (Graulich 1993: 9). Moving beyond these female influences, Leslie Silko emerged as a highly literate, contemporary storyteller. Before her, Aunt Susie attended Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania and continued her education at Dickinson College. In his comment on the photograph of a young Silko and her Aunt Susie, Bernard Hirsch emphasises the strong connection between these two females. Silko, he points out, has called herself the "self-acknowledged, self-appointed heir" of her Aunt Susie. This means, Hirsch says, "not merely ... a genealogical context ... but a continuous generational line of Laguna storytellers as well" (1993: 153). Laguna/Keres women played a crucial role, therefore, in maintaining tribal memory, their vehicle - like Silko's - was the story.

Without doubt, Leslie Silko had heard the stories of the young woman abducted from her tribe, sometimes reluctantly, sometimes not. Whether she's rescued by her husband, escapes on her own, or never returns, Yellow Woman stands for a number of different things, most often Corn Woman, and as such is central to the survival and wellbeing of the tribe. She must be restored, for she herself is restorative. The Yellow Woman stories, Paula Gunn Allen says, are about "loss, persecution, rescue, and the relation of these to the sacred ..." (Allen 1989: 210). Leslie Marmon Silko remembers the Yellow Woman stories and she requires that her hero in *Ceremony* - and her reader - do the same.

Silko's version of the Yellow Woman story is centered upon a young married woman who wakes up one morning to discover a handsome young man sleeping by her side. They lie beside the river near the Pueblo where she lives with her husband and baby, her mother and grandmother. This sexual liaison comes as a total surprise to the unnamed woman and she prepares to return home before her lover notices. As she readies herself to leave the man named Silva, he wakes up. He calls her "Yellow Woman" and when she tells him that's not her name he laughs and blithely abducts her on horseback to his place in the mountains. They make love again and he teases her about her heavy breathing. She is not doing this totally against her will.

The next morning she wakes up alone; she wonders where he is and who he is. He may be a Ka'tsina or mountain spirit. She thinks about the Yellow Woman stories and whether what's happening to her is real or mythic. Silva comes back from hunting and when she accompanies him on a trip to town, they meet a white rancher who confronts Silva about poaching cattle. The young woman rides away, as Silva directs, but not back to the cabin. Going down the mountain towards the Pueblo, she hears gunshots. She continues back home and imagines the family that awaits her.

She wishes her grandfather were still around for he loved the Yellow Woman stories and she'd enjoy telling him of her own experience. Tribal stories are preserved because they are dramatic - like this one - but also because they are told and retold. In a traditional oral culture, a tribal member would have no problem recalling the stories. When tribal members are displaced, recalling the stories becomes more problematic and crucial. Silko deals with this problem in the character of Tayo, the disaffected war veteran of *Ceremony*. His skill at remembering tribal stories has atrophied and he must be encouraged.

The key to Tayo's redemption, in Ts'eh's words, is to "[r]emember ... remember everything" (p. 235). Likewise, the reader of *Ceremony* must perform considerable feats of memory. As Susan Scarberry says, "We, like Tayo, must constantly remember the earlier fragments of the story line ..." (quoted in Sands & Ruoff 1979: 64). The story is significant to the people, it contributes to their identity and survival, and it must be remembered. In his study of Scott Momaday, Matthias Schubnell observes a similar phenomenon: "One of the most important purposes of [tribal] stories is to bring the members of the tribe into contact with the creative powers which brought the universe and the people into being" (1985: 56). Obviously, you cannot make that spiritual contact unless you remember the stories. Thus an understanding of the connection between memory and story becomes essential. By perceiving this connection - better yet, by experiencing it - we can achieve insight into Silko's thematic concerns, her narrative method and the nature of her own creative process.

Schubnell also points out that "[a] verbal universe is, of course, not only the home of ancient storytellers but also the concern of modern writers" (1985: 51). He cites Joyce, Proust, Stevens and Nabokov. The key point here is that Silko, Momaday and the above-mentioned writers "bear witness to the universality of imaginative power ..." (1985: 62). Studying Silko's novel brings with it the boon of new insight into how the tribal imagination works and how a contemporary writer functions within an ancient tradition.

Tribal people, in general, rely on the oral tradition, or story, to transmit tribal history, values and mythology. Story becomes a vehicle, therefore, for maintaining tribal traditions and informing tribal identity. Without the tribe there would be no story; the story emerges from tribal experience. The corollary is equally true: without the story there would be no tribe. In this respect, story functions as a tribal matrix. Furthermore, the tribe exists as much in the imagination of the tribal members as it does in individual human beings and their material relationships with one another. *To exist in the imagination* does not imply a fantasy of some sort. Rather, it implies connections with a tribal past, with creative origins and with spiritual dignity. Fueling that imagination is the power of story.

Stories work differently in tribal literatures (spoken stories as well as contemporary fictions) than they do in modern Western literature. The twentieth-century novelist seldom demands that we draw upon a collective memory, but gives us something new - as if heeding Pound's dictum to modern poets: "Make it new". The aesthetic of American Indian literature often seems to be "make it old" but place it in a modern context and observe the interplay between the old and the new. In this manner, the old stories are constantly revitalized. The past deeply imbues the present; time is circular. Silko and American Indian writers such as N. Scott Momaday, Linda Hogan and Louise Erdrich, among others, "come from cultures in which the concept of the circularity of life is substituted for linear time" (Sands & Ruoff 1979: 65). In such cultures, stories seldom end; they circle around on themselves and get retold. In studying the retelling of the Yellow Woman story in *Ceremony*, we can observe how Silko takes from the tribal memory and in so doing transforms and revitalizes the old story.

My focus is the centrality of tradition in Silko's creative process, a concept I make clear with emphasis upon the character of Ts'eh. My main point is simple: Ts'eh represents Yellow Woman, a familiar figure to the Keres Pueblo people. As American Indian narrative moves out from the tribal audience already familiar with the stories to a mainstream audience, it requires the reader to adopt an Indian perspective. We must learn the stories which gave rise to contemporary fiction if we want to understand and appreciate the literature fully. Silko's

reader, therefore, must meet the challenge of Ts'eh's imperative: we must "[r]emember ... remember everything".

Of course, that's impossible, but if we read *Ceremony* and remember at least certain key features of Silko's short story, "Yellow Woman", we will have come closer to her ideal audience. For this, we will be rewarded. As Trinh T. Minh-ha tells us in *Woman, Native, Other*, "A story is *not* just a story. Once the forces have been aroused and set into motion, they can't simply be stopped, at someone's request. Once told, the story is bound to circulate; humanized, it may have a temporary end, but its effects linger on and its end is never truly an end" (Minh-ha 1989: 133). In story, therefore, lie distinct possibilities for renewal. Silko's opening description of Ts'eh provides a good starting point for this discussion, for it presents us with some familiar motifs from the "Yellow Woman" story: willow, mountain, apricot, and yellow:

> [Tayo] noticed she was holding a small willow staff, slightly curved at one end. A cool wind blew down from the northwest rim of the mountain plateau above them and rattled the apricot leaves .... She was wearing a man's shirt tucked into a yellow skirt that hung below her knees. Pale buckskin moccasins reached the edge of her skirt. The silver buttons up the side of each moccasin had rainbirds carved on them. She wasn't much older than he was, but she wore her hair long, like the old women did, pinned back in a knot.
>
> (Silko 1977: 177)

Silko unites two key images in one sentence - the mountain and the apricot leaves. In the "Yellow Woman" story, Silva was presented as a ka'tsina from the north. When he took Yellow Woman to his place in the mountains, she found herself eating some dried apricots, the only food she could find around the house. She was hungry and these apricots sustained her. Imagine that Yellow Woman had stayed in the mountains and you get Ts'eh, the woman who is crucial to the restoration of life, energy, and love in Tayo, the protagonist of *Ceremony*. Ts'eh wears a yellow skirt. Yellow is significant; it could be no other color. As Paula Gunn Allen points out in *The Sacred Hoop*, "Kochinnenako, Yellow Woman, is in some sense a name that means Woman-Woman because among the Keres, yellow is the color for women ..." (1986: 226).

Ts'eh, Woman-Woman, is carrying a willow staff, similar to the one Silva was in the process of stripping of its leaves when he met Yellow Woman by the river in Silko's short story. Why a willow staff? Willows thrive only where there is abundant water. If that water is deep beneath the earth they will send out their roots far and wide to sustain the life of the tree. To a desert people, a willow represents this vital source of life and would become an apt symbol of rebirth and the creative force. Silko's imagery is obvious and strong: Ts'eh will become

the important spirit of rejuvenation for the war-weary Tayo.

When Tayo first comes to her place in the mountains, however, Ts'eh is immediately confrontational. Her questions and her assertiveness are similar to Yellow Woman's facing-down of Silva in the early section of Silko's short story. Whereas Yellow Woman was laughed at by Silva and told that she is not in charge, Ts'eh now dominates this opening scene between her and Tayo. The characterization of Ts'eh is rooted in ordinary, human traits which recall Yellow Woman of the earlier tale. At the same time, she is Yellow Woman heightened and magnified, one of the spirit people. Tayo's arrival may have surprised her in its timing, but she knows that there are larger forces at play than lost cattle or difficult road conditions. She knows that Tayo has been sent her way by Betonie, the medicine man who initiated him into the healing ceremony, and she knows the role she must play.

She invites Tayo inside her home and tells him, "Sit down. Eat." Like Silva in Silko's short story, Ts'eh orders her guest around, her tone peremptory but kind. And like the earlier Yellow Woman, she cooks the meal. Tayo watches her just as Silva had watched Yellow Woman: "He watched her move lids and pots on the small cookstove. She put a bowl and spoon in front of him. The chili was thick, red like fresh blood, and full of dried corn and fresh venison" (p. 178). If Tayo is to be healed, he must be nourished. Throughout the novel, Tayo has difficulty keeping any food down. Ts'eh knows what will nourish him. She also knows what's going on in the night sky and tells him: "The sky is clear. You can see the stars tonight." While her observation is matter-of-fact, it is portentous, for old Betonie had told Tayo that he must become part of a ceremony, the elements of which are stars, mountain, woman, and cattle. Everything about their encounter is portentous, even their lovemaking.

The erotic is as strong a component of *Ceremony* as it was in "Yellow Woman". The otherwise nameless Yellow Woman was abducted, albeit willingly, by the lustful Silva, and enjoys his lovemaking. Ts'eh is the initiator of the lovemaking between her and Tayo. Silko portrays Ts'eh as the more active partner:

> He watched her face, and her eyes never shifted; they were with him while she moved out of her clothes and while she slipped his jeans down his legs, stroking his thighs. She unbuttoned his shirt, and all he was aware of was the heat of his own breathing and the warmth radiating from his belly, pulsing between his legs. He was afraid of being lost, so he repeated trail marks to himself: this is my mouth tasting the salt of her brown breasts; this is my voice calling out to her. He eased himself deeper within her and felt the warmth close around him like river sand, softly giving way under foot, then closing firmly around the ankle in cloudy warm water. But he did not get lost, and he smiled

at her as she held his hips and pulled him closer.

(Silko 1977: 180-181)

Silko emphasizes Ts'eh's effect on Tayo. If we have read his story sympathetically, we know his despair and agony. We care for him because Silko has drawn us into a deep understanding of his torment and its causes. Thus we feel the impact of his resurgence of life ("his own breathing") in his lovemaking with Ts'eh. As his body moves into hers it is as if he were being closed around by "river sand ... closing firmly around the ankle in cloudy warm water". Granted, this image could be read as threatening. It is not. Silko's water imagery recalls the meeting of Yellow Woman and Silva by the river. Furthermore, water serves in the novel as a primary metaphor for rebirth and renewal; its absence signifies a major deprivation, both physical and spiritual. In the legendary stories which parallel the main plot of the novel, Reed Woman disappears and her retrieval must be accomplished if it is ever to rain again. As Tayo is renewed in the love of Ts'eh, so too the land and the people will be restored literally by rain and symbolically by a deeper connection with the feminine principle.

Ts'eh is Yellow Woman transformed and she is Reed Woman. As Silko deepens the character of Ts'eh, we are brought further into the realm of the mythic. Tayo doesn't learn her name until he returns from the mountain, having found the cattle and survived the winter storm. Time passes; he meets Ts'eh again as she is gathering roots and leaves. When he asks her, she tells him, "I'm a Montano. You can call me Ts'eh. That's my nickname." Her Indian name is quite long, she says, so she has shortened it. Montano, of course, means mountain.

Tayo learns about the roots and plants she has gathered. She says about one plant: "I'll take it from here and plant it in another place, a canyon where it hasn't rained for a while" (Silko 1977: 224). She asks him to gather another plant for her because its seed won't be ready until autumn. He promises. Ts'eh's involvement with the plant world, with sowing in this instance, and with the apricot tree in a previous metaphor, emphasizes her nurturant, Earth-Mother aspect. Sometimes she is not around and she requires Tayo's assistance for "the work" of bringing life (the plant) to nonfertile places (the canyon). As Paula Gunn Allen explains in *The Sacred Hoop*: "Every tribe has a responsibility to the workings of the universe; today as yesterday, human beings play an intrinsic role in the ongoing creation" (1986: 73). In this universe, there are no omnipotent gods and goddesses, but a dynamic, ongoing relationship between the human and the cosmos. As Tayo takes up the task given him by Ts'eh he participates in the creation of the universe. He could not do this without her guidance.

Ts'eh is powerful in more respects than her fecundity or her ability to cure Tayo. Her power also contains elements of force - in a positive sense. Anglo/Feminist theory has usually denigrated force as masculine and patriarchal. Adrienne Rich, for example, writes of man's "power over" woman and "his control of the world by force, not from anything fertile or life-giving in him" (Rich 1993: 168). What we notice in the character of Ts'eh is both a "fertile, life-giving" aspect and a force within her that makes things happen for the good. This mix of qualities allows more permeability in gender boundaries (certainly a goal of progressive feminism) and indicates a great deal about American Indian perspectives. To the American Indian, Paula Gunn Allen says,

> "Sacred", "power", and "medicine" are related terms. Having power means being able to use this extra force without being harmed by it. This is a particular talent that human beings possess to greater or lesser degree, and "medicine" is a term used for the personal force through which one possesses power. Medicine is powerful in itself, but its power can be used only by certain persons, under certain conditions, and for certain purposes.
>
> (Allen 1986: 72-73)

Ts'eh, as I shall point out, is a "medicine" woman who wields her "power" for "sacred" purposes.

Silko conveys the power of Ts'eh through imagery. Tayo, for example, notices the blanket which she puts over her head, at their first meeting, to block the wind-whipped sand. He sees the "designs woven across the blanket in four colors: patterns of storm clouds in white and gray; black lightning scattered through brown wind" (Silko 1977: 177). Ts'eh's possession of this blanket signifies her Mountain-Woman aspect. She is the origin of the storm clouds, good omens in the context of the novel, for the land suffers from years of drought.

Ts'eh's blanket reappears when Tayo returns to Ts'eh's home, having survived a blizzard and encountered the hunter who lives with Ts'eh. We could regard the hunter as Silva transformed and infinitely more benign. Whatever the hunter represents, he is a remnant of traditional Yellow Woman stories, the abductor: be he a ka'tsina or sun or Whirlwind (Allen 1989: 211-228). It's still snowing and the hunter directs the woman to "fold up the blanket before the snow breaks the branches [of the apricot tree]" (Silko 1977: 208). When Tayo offers to go out and shake the snow off the tree, he observes Ts'eh's actions: "The black storm-pattern blanket was spread open across the gray flagstone. He watched her fold it" (p. 208). Then it stops snowing. Such is the power of Ts'eh.

Clearly, Silko wants us to think that Ts'eh's spreading of the storm blanket brought on the storm. In acting as camouflage, the storm saved Tayo and

allowed him to escape from the Texas ranchers on the mountain and retrieve Josiah's cattle. Ts'eh wields the *power* of the storm-blanket in this context without being harmed herself. She understands the circumstances of Tayo's condition and wields her power purposefully.

When Tayo wonders aloud whether the Texas ranchers will come "looking for the cattle", she assures him they will not. When he asks, "Why not?" she responds with "a look that chilled him. She must have seen his fear because she smiled ..." and said something about all the snow on the mountain (p. 213). Ts'eh is a woman who knows her power. She is Yellow Woman no more but a ka'tsina in her own right. Ts'eh's assumption of this power role is evidence of the permeable boundaries of gender in the novel. Furthermore, Tayo behaves like a Yellow Woman and returns to his village with a story to tell. The elders are especially interested in Ts'eh, as the last section of the novel makes apparent.

Tayo's last significant act in *Ceremony* is telling his story in the kiva to the old men of his tribe. The context of his storytelling confers status on him and his experience. It is not something he simply relates in a bar or over a backyard fence. He has been invited to the kiva; enough is known about his experience so that all the details become important. Thus Tayo tells the old men of Laguna Pueblo his story. "They stopped him frequently with questions about the location and the time of day; they asked about the direction she had come from and the color of her eyes" (p. 257). Through the details, the old men know the identity of Ts'eh and they rejoice. At this point, Silko's novel slips into the ritualized poetry associated with the parallel story of Reed Woman:

They started crying
the old men started crying
A'moo'ooh! A'moo'ooh!
You have seen her
We will be blessed
again.

The reference to A'moo'ooh recalls an earlier incident in the novel and brings us to the full significance of storytelling, memory and tradition. What happened to Tayo is not "just a story," but essential to the continuation of the life of his tribe and its consciousness. Silko conveys this theme through incident and symbol. In the earlier episode, Tayo and Ts'eh are together when they discover a she-elk petroglyph on an isolated sandstone cliff. In a flashback, Silko describes a time in the past when the she-elk was prominent in tribal ritual:

> The she-elk was bigger than life, painted in pale lavender clay on the south face of sandstone, along the base of the cliff. Her great belly was swollen with new

> life as she leaped across the yellow sandrock, startled forever across the curve of cliff rock, ears flung back to catch a sound behind her. The priests who painted her each year always cried when they stood back from the cliff and saw her. "A'moo'ooh! A'moo'ooh! you are so beautiful! You carry all that life! A'moo'ooh! With you, the cliff comes alive".
>
> (Silko 1977: 230)

The she-elk is a fertility symbol and its shrine has been neglected since the beginning of World War Two. Ts'eh and Tayo restore what they can of its appearance. It saddens Tayo, but Ts'eh reassures him: "As long as you remember what you have seen, then nothing is gone. As long as you remember, it is part of this story we have together" (p. 231). To the surprise and anger of Tayo, Ts'eh weeps in the aftermath of their discovery and restoration of the she-elk. She who has been so strong and wise, so evidently a presence of great power and fortitude, breaks down in sobs. Tayo is chagrined: "Why are you crying?" he asks. "The end of the story", she replies. "They want to change it. They want it to end here, the way all their stories end, encircling slowly to choke the life away" (pp. 231-232).

In part, her meaning refers specifically to Tayo. She knows that Emo, the disgruntled veteran and enemy of Tayo, plans to get him returned to the mental hospital. As a prophet, she foresees Emo's plan, his brutality and vengefulness. Although Tayo questions how she can know Emo's plans, he understands that "like old Betonie, she could see reflections in sandrock pools of rainwater ...; she heard voices, low and distant in the night" (p. 232). She reveals to him enough of what she knows to warn him away from danger. Her purpose is to maintain the proper end of Tayo's story: his rebirth and renewal.

Beyond her impact on Tayo as an individual, Ts'eh hopes to affect the tribe and this is the fuller meaning of her lament about "the end of the story" - or the end of tribal life in its widest possible sense. Through the tribal consciousness and the continuing vitality of their way of knowing, of seeing, of being in the world, Ts'eh can work towards the goal of the restoration of order and harmony in the world. To achieve this goal, it is essential that she affect Tayo in an indelible way. She tells him, "Remember ... remember everything" (p. 235).

Tayo avoids the danger posed by Emo, one of the "destroyers," and thus the story he lives, the story he tells to the old men in the kiva, is a paean to the life force, to A'moo'ooh, the pregnant she-elk. Nor does his story end with his telling of it but continues as long as there are ears to listen, minds to remember, voices to speak.

In creating Ts'eh in *Ceremony*, Leslie Marmon Silko echoes her previous story, "Yellow Woman". In doing so, Silko participates in a profound way in the American Indian oral tradition. That is, she creates her mythic tale by gradually

accreting the story from bits of "memory" of her earlier story. Along with the familiar imagery associated with Yellow Woman, Silko transforms traditional material to create a stronger female character.

Ts'eh's strengths are connected to her femaleness, as I have shown. Most apparent is her love for Tayo, a sexual/spiritual love strong enough to enable him to transform his life and in the process, the life of the tribe. Ts'eh is strong, as well, in her conviction about the power of story. She does not simply believe in story; she tells stories and urges Tayo to "remember" and through memory to develop his own storytelling abilities. Storytelling is, of course, an ability of both males and females, but in the Keres/Pueblo tradition, Thought-Woman is at the root of the process; she thinks the universe into being. In Silko's *Storyteller*, as Linda Danielson asserts, "... ordinary tribal women [are] Silko's most frequently selected narrators who carry on Thought Woman's functions of speaking into being" (Danielson 1993: 202). Silko's readers must conclude, therefore, that femaleness and the power of story are bound inextricably, but not exclusively. Danielson goes on to state that "Silko certainly credits the creative power in men as well as in women" (p. 202), as we can see in the relationship between Tayo and Ts'eh.

The mythic/symbolic value of Ts'eh further enhances her strength as a female character. As a representation of the feminine principle, she is the repository of incredible power: she can even control the elements. She needs her advocates, however. She cannot take care of the universe on her own. Rather than a weakness, this can be viewed as a strength, for power shared is power extended and thus magnified.

In creating *Ceremony*, Silko's impulse is both feminist and tribal. She imagines believing in the tribal stories despite the dominance of Western civilization; the stories are the more powerful force. As Melody Graulich points out, "Silko's interest in storytelling as central to the creation of community and self is shared by many contemporary Indian writers, Paula Gunn Allen, Simon Ortiz, Louise Erdrich, and especially Scott Momaday ..." (Graulich 1993: 13). American Indian writers, both male and female, share a common aesthetic principle which is rooted in the oral tradition of storytelling. In Silko's particular case, she wants her readers to remember the lineaments of her earlier story and to make the connections I have outlined. Thus we learn how to read Silko's novel by remembering her previous narrative. As readers and rememberers, we participate in one of the key facets of the story. Through our activity we help to create the narrative universe.

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