PARUZZO, DANIELA PIL
Contemporany native

2008 71195

MFN:
Clasif:
T-757

71195

CONTEMPORARY NATIVE AMERICAN FEMININE SHORT FICTION: WOMEN'S POWER IN THE (RE)CONSTRUCTION OF MEMORY AND IDENTITY

MAESTRÍA EN INGLÉS
ORIENTACIÓN: LITERATURA ANGLOAMERICANA

DANIELA PILAR PARUZZO

Año 2008

UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL DE RÍO CUARTO
ESCUELA DE POSTGRADUACIÓN
FACULTAD DE CIENCIAS HUMANAS

CONTEMPORARY NATIVE AMERICAN FEMININE SHORT FICTION: WOMEN'S POWER IN THE (RE)CONSTRUCTION OF MEMORY AND IDENTITY

MAGISTER EN INGLÉS
Mención: Literatura Angloamericana

Daniela Pilar Paruzzo

Directora: Mgter. Ana Celi
Co-Director: Dr. David Foster

Defensa: 23 de marzo de 2009

To my parents, Gladis and Eugenio,
who have always fostered in me the pursuing of dreams and
greatly helped me in so doing.

To my husband, Jorge,
who helped in balancing academic and family life.

To my little daughters, Pilar and Guadalupe,
who had to deal with Mommy's academic life.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to:

- Magister Ana Celi, my mentor and former Professor, who encouraged me to write this work and enthusiastically devoted her time in revising its progression
- Doctor David Foster, my co-mentor, from Arizona State University, Arizona, U.S.A., whose insights enlightened me and thus, this work
- all my instructors who have enriched my knowledge and understanding
- Robert and Mary Ann Coupland from Valentine, Nebraska, U.S.A., who first seduced me into the Native American World and further instilled in me the curiosity and wonder on Native American literature
- Doctor Margara Averbach whose first insights to my idea on working with Native American literature greatly contributed to the selection of bibliography
- Sandra Cheowa Mokine former Professor at Pikes Peak Community College, Colorado Springs, Colorado, U.S.A. who, without knowing me, generously provided me with invaluable bibliography by and about Native Americans
- Pikes Peak Community College colleagues at Colorado Springs, Colorado, who put me in contact with Sandra Cheowa Mokine and suggested relevant bibliography on Native American Studies
- Karen Standridge and Mark Miller from Colorado Springs, who generously brought me more books and music by Native American authors
- colleagues at the University and friends with whom we created a sort of support team in the "thesis enterprise," especially Valeria Engert with whom we shared readings, writings, rewritings, tears, giggles, and dreams
- my students—former, present, and to-come—for they are the very reason of all my work
- the Universidad Nacional de Río Cuarto for financially supporting this Masters Degree
- last but not least, my family—nuclear and extended—who shared with me anxieties, worries, and joy.

ABSTRACT

The present work aims at analyzing the literary discourse of contemporary Native American female authors in relation to Native American women, power, memory, and identity in short stories of this ethnic group. "The Warriors" (1985) by Anna Lee Walters (Otto-Pawnee), "Fleur" (1986) by Louise Erdrich (Chippewa), "Tough Love" (1983) by Paula Gunn Allen (Laguna Pueblo/Sioux), "Lullaby" (1974) and "Yellow Woman" (1974) by Leslie Marmon Silko (Laguna Pueblo)" are the literary pieces selected. These short stories are studied as postcolonial discourses that expose the colonial difference hidden by the hegemonic discourse. The critical apparatus for the analysis of the literary pieces includes Native American criticism and constructs exported from the postcolonial and feminist theories. Through the analysis and discussion of the corpus, it is demonstrated that Native American writers, with their life and work, create critical loci of enunciation to resist the hegemonic power and to (re)construct, define, and preserve cultural and self-identity. Hence, the contemporary Native American woman erects as *resistance woman* preserving and transmitting memory and culture through storytelling. The category of *resistance woman* is proposed to refer to the woman who has been a victim of non-Native society due to either rejection, neglect, violence, or assimilation and who is aware of the oppression instilled on her, consequently, she goes back to tradition, (re)creates herself, and resists, thus preserving self and communal memory and culture. For Native American writers, as a minority group, the literary discourse becomes a means of transmission, preservation, and resistance.

RESUMEN

El presente trabajo tiene por objetivo analizar el discurso literario de autoras aborígenes contemporáneas focalizando en las mujeres aborígenes, el poder, la memoria y la identidad manifiestos en los cuentos (short stories) de este grupo étnico. "The Warriors" (1985) de Anna Lee Walters (Otto-Pawnee), "Fleur" (1986) de Louise Erdrich (Chippewa), "Tough Love" (1983) de Paula Allen (Laguna Pueblo/Sioux), "Lullaby" (1974) y "Yellow Woman" (1974) de Leslie Marmon Silko (Laguna Pueblo) son las obras seleccionadas. Estos cuentos son estudiados como discursos postcoloniales que exponen la diferencia colonial ocultada por el discurso hegemónico. El aparato crítico para el análisis de las obras incluye crítica aborigen y constructos exportados de las teorías postcolonial y feminista. A través del análisis y discusión del corpus, se demuestra que las escritoras aborígenes, con su vida y obras, crean lugares de enunciación críticos para resistir al poder hegemónico y (re)construir, definir y preservar la identidad personal y cultural. Consecuentemente, la mujer aborigen contemporánea se erige como *mujer de resistencia* preservando y transmitiendo la memoria y la cultura por medio de la narración. La categoría de *mujer de resistencia* se propone para referir a la mujer que ha sido victima de la sociedad no aborigen debido a rechazo, desprecio, violencia o asimilación y que es consciente de la opresión que sufre, consecuentemente, vuelve a la tradición, se (re)crea y resiste preservando así la memoria y cultura comunal y propias. Para las escritoras aborígenes, como grupo minoritario, el discurso literario se torna en un medio de transmisión, preservación and resistencia.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS **2**

ABSTRACT **3**

TABLE OF CONTENTS **4**

INTRODUCTION **5**

CHAPTER I: UNAVOIDABLE PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS .. **10**

I.A. WHAT'S IN A NAME? 10

I.B. NATIVE AMERICAN LITERATURE 13

I.C. CANON FORMATION, CANON TRANSFORMATION 18

CHAPTER II: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK **23**

CHAPTER III: ANALYSIS **35**

III. A. AUTHORESS CHOICE, STORY CHOICE 35

III. A. 1. "The Warriors": A Battle for Beauty *38*

III. A. 2. "Fleur" : (A) Woman Blossom *42*

III. A. 3. "Tough Love" : A Mother's Fertile Drought *46*

III. A. 4. "Lullaby" : A Lull For The Soul *51*

III. A. 5. "Yellow Woman": The Perennially Changing Woman Myth *55*

CHAPTER IV: DISCUSSION **60**

IV.A. APPROPRIATED FORM, MEDIUM, AND LANGUAGE 60

IV.B. BEYOND COLONIZATION 63

IV.B.1. Back to Myth - Forward to Women *63*

IV.C. WOMEN'S POWER 69

IV.D. MEMORY 75

IV.E. IDENTITY 79

CHAPTER V: CONCLUDING REMARKS **84**

WORKS CITED **89**

INTRODUCTION

What does it mean to be a *minority*? Sometimes *minority* "simply"[1] means being different from the rest, having "something" that is own and not "shared" by the rest. But this "simple" fact becomes ironically complex when there are many "minorities" all belonging to only one big whole in which "minorities" and "majorities" interchange places depending on the situations, circumstances, beliefs. Many a time, the mere fact of thinking differently causes one to be set apart as a minority and to suffer the consequences of not being like "the others," like those who seem to be "right," who seem to have "the truth," like the so-called "majority." The fact of being considered a minority in general bears all the prejudices that are derived from that fact and worst of all, it bears the negative attitudes people are used to having towards those who are not alike the rest.

The issue of minorities is an interesting, complex, and polemic one that has captivated the attention of specialists in diverse fields of knowledge. Literature has not been the exception. The so-called "minority literature" or "emergent literature" written by those considered a minority in the ethnic map of the United States of America is an appealing research field that offers a prism through which it is possible to discover an Other view (Paruzzo, 1999; Paruzzo and Engert, 2007).

In fact, ignorance and curiosity have been the trigger for this fascinating endeavor in researching the field of Native American literature. Though probably not an original contribution to the literary field—theory and research—this work is a curious academic exploration and contribution to the ongoing field of Native American literature written by women, where much research is needed as specialists in the field suggest, main among them: Allen, Owens, Vizenor, and Velie. My specific field of study is contemporary Native American literature written by Native American women. Then, in the context of this work,

---

[1] Throughout the work, terms in inverted commas indicate that the term is a problematic one, thus, it needs to be questioned.

the notion of literature refers to literature about Native Americans produced by Native Americans, specifically short stories written by contemporary Native American women in the United States of America. I have chosen the appropriated genre short story because I consider it the genre closer to traditional storytelling, an essentially oral tradition among the Pueblos[2] (Preyer, 1989; Owens, 1992; Allen, 1996). It is worth remarking that, unlike their non-Native American counterparts, Native American writers have almost all developed their literary skills in prose and poetry alike.

I realize I have embarked on a complex enterprise because Native American literature offers a challenging and complex geohistorical cultural landscape. I acknowledge the fact that Native American literature is subject to vicissitudes of interpretation in a different context, that is, in a non-Native context, which is my context. It is true that the reality of what and how we perceive depends on our own experience and standpoint. Thus, guided by the appropriate theory and criticism, I hope no to be culturally biased. I believe it proper here to make a reflection. We speak of Western ideas, Western canon, Western domination to refer to the ideas, canon, domination born in Europe which in fact is the East if we consider the Greenwich Mean Time representing the imaginary dividing line in the globe. From that standpoint, the American Continent is the "true" West, The Western hemisphere. Again, our standpoint varies the view we have. Shouldn't we really look at the "real" west for a "right" view? In fact, as Highwater clearly states, "the Western world is a *concept* and not a geographical place" (41, emphasis added) and because it is a concept, it can be and *is* manipulated by those who conceive it and who, based on such conceptualization, divide and thus rule the world to their own benefit. Bringing Foucault to the scene, I would say that what is "true" depends on who controls discourse.

To fully appreciate and understand this work, as you will read ahead, it is necessary to leave aside the westernized, institutionalized mind and tune the frequency of an ancient ever-present world; it is necessary to tune in with

[2] See section I.B. "Native American Literature"

ancient rhythms, rhythms which are alien to us, "post-Columbus people." I follow James Ruppert in the conceptualization of *Western* and *Native*. Ruppert defines these terms in the following way:

> By *Western*, I refer to those cultural backgrounds in common with the various groups of Europe and America. By *Native*, I refer to the specific Native American cultural traditions with which the Native writer identifies and any areas of commonality between the many other cultural traditions. (8)

There is a "cultural gulf" between the Native American and the Western phenomena that is being bridged by Native American female writers in a special way, in the way of the *Grandmothers*. In this bridging, Native American female writers create new loci of enunciation that liberate long-silenced voices that highlight colonial differences by means of counter discourses that question and contest to long-heard hegemonic discourses (Paruzzo and Engert, 2007). Then, because the Native American literary discourse is a locus of enunciation that reveals the socio-cultural reality of a group that has been marginalized for centuries and that wants to make its own (hi)story heard, claiming its culture, and thus preserving its memory and identity, it seems appropriate to analyze the literary discourse of Native American female authors in relation to Native American women, power, memory, and identity in contemporary short stories of this ethnic group. Traditionally, Native American literature has been woman-focused giving women a centrality they lost with colonization and patriarchy. Nowadays, contemporary Native American authoresses aim at recovering "the woman-focused context . . . that has been [purposely] ignored . . . to hide the centrality of women in tribal society, tribal literature, and tribal hearts and minds" (Allen, Sacred 268).

"The Warriors" (1985) by Anna Lee Walters (Otto-Pawnee), "Fleur" (1986) by Louise Erdrich (Chippewa), "Tough Love" (1983) by Paula Gunn Allen (Laguna Pueblo/Sioux), "Lullaby" (1974) and "Yellow Woman" (1974) by Leslie Marmon Silko (Laguna Pueblo)" are the contemporary short stories selected for the analysis in the present work. All the stories portray women in situation of power in a postcolonial context where the dominant discourse is mainly western, not aboriginal. Though acknowledging the fact that each Native

American tribe has its unique set of ideologies, for the purposes of this study, I make a generalization and put them under the category of tribal beliefs as the Native American writer and critic Paula Allen does in her book The Sacred Hoop. I focus on the commonalities among the different Pueblos to analyze and discuss the concepts of power, memory, and identity.

It is widely known, to those acquainted with the Native American world, that the landscape is central to the beliefs and identity of Native Americans, especially to Southwestern tribes, that is why its presence is strong in Native American narratives as is the case in the pieces chosen for this work. However, I will not directly concentrate on references to the landscape or the landscape in itself when it comes to the discussion of Native American identity because my focus is on unveiling how personal and communal identity is (re)constructed, defined, and preserved in and through the language and events in the stories created by contemporary Native American female storymakers and storytellers. In addition to the theory chosen to approach the corpus, the discussion of the short stories will be illuminated with critical and biographical essays by different Native American writers.

When it comes to the discussion of the Native American woman, inspired by Mary H. Washington's typology of female characters,[3] I propose the category of *resistance woman*. For *resistance woman* I understand the woman who has been a victim of the non-Native society due to either rejection, neglect, violence, or assimilation and who is aware of the oppression instilled on her and so goes back to tradition, (re)creates herself, and resists; thus, preserving self and communal memory and culture.

In relation to the organization of this thesis, I would say the work is arranged in short sections for a friendly reading. The work has five chapters, some of which are subdivided into sections, preceded by the present

[3] Washington refers to three categories of women: the *suspended woman*, who is the victim of men and of society as a whole, with few or no options, *suspended* because she cannot do anything about her situation; the *assimilated woman*, who is not victimized by physical violence and has much more control of her life, but who is victimized by psychological violence in that she is cut off from her roots by her desire to be accepted by white society, the *emergent woman*, who is coming to an awareness of her own psychological and political oppression and becoming capable of creating a new life and new choices for herself, usually through a harsh experience of initiation that makes her ready for the change. (qtd. in Tyson 394)

INTRODUCTION. In Chapter I, entitled UNAVOIDABLE PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS, I deal with post-Columbus designations to refer to the people inhabiting today's continental U.S.A. (*What's in name?*), with *Native American Literature*, and the issue of *Canon Formation, Canon Transformation*. Chapter II contains the THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK for the analysis of the literary pieces. The critical apparatus for the analysis of the selected Native American literature includes constructs from diverse theories (Native American, postcolonial, and feminist) considered pertinent to the work's focus. Chapter III, ANALYSIS, includes the analysis of the corpus introduced with the section *Authoress Choice, Story Choice* that justifies the selection of both authoresses and short stories. Chapter IV comprises the DISCUSSION which is subdivided into the sections *Appropriated Foreign Form, Medium, and Language; Beyond Colonization: Back to Myth - Forward to Women; Women's Power; Memory;* and *Identity* in which I discuss the main categories proposed for this thesis. And finally Chapter V offers some CONCLUDING REMARKS to the work. Throughout the work, there are terms between inverted commas which signal that the meaning of those terms is open to debate.

Both doing research on the field of Native American literature and writing on the topic have been a wonderful learning experience, that is still in process. I hope that the ideas discussed in this "mosaic of citations" be a contribution to the exciting and growing field of study that Native American literature is and open up for new explorations on this field. In this mosaic of citations, I intend to create an original pattern; original in the sense of being woven with the threads of my own academic curiosity, experience, and knowledge in the process of spinning the exciting world of Native American literature.

Welcome to the world of *All-That-Is*.

CHAPTER I: UNAVOIDABLE PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

I.A. What's in a name?

Tell me how you are called and I'll tell you who you are.
Tell me what they call you and I'll tell you who they are.

When referring to the people in the Americas, it is erroneous to think of them in the mass because those people belong to very different countries and thus, they have very different cultures that make each group of people unique in its diversity, each group has its own distinguishable identity. The American continent is inhabited from north to south by a variety of very different people with their particular idiosyncrasy each. Upon arrival on the later-called American continent, the Europeans thought of the people they encountered a big whole, a homogeneous whole, denying each group its uniqueness. In 1492, when Columbus arrived in the continent, the variety and diversity of ethnic groups was very large, a fact Columbus dismissed, calling the inhabitants of what he thought were The West Indies, Indians, a misnomer resulting from a geographical error that, though soon recognized, has prevailed for centuries misreferring to the inhabitants of the newly "discovered" lands. I could go even further and transplant the idea of a thought-to-be homogeneity to a single country where such a diversity is also present. For our purposes, I will consider the United States of America. It is estimated that by the time of the European arrival there were three hundred cultural groups who spoke more than two hundred and fifty languages in North America (Trout, 1999; Velie, 1995). Among the Peoples there were, and there still are, significant linguistic, physical, and cultural differences that the colonizers did not recognize or failed to consider; thus, the appellation of *Indian* to the "other," the non-European being in the "New World."

Native American historian Robert Berkhofer, Jr. reflects on the European conception of the inhabitants of the "New" lands as follows: "Since the original inhabitants of the Western Hemisphere neither called themselves by a single

term nor understood themselves as a collectivity, the idea and the image of the Indian must be a White conception." A view that is supported by the Massachusetts missionary John Eliot's report on a tribesman who asked Berkhofer "Why do you call us Indians?" (qtd. in Highwater 28).

Whatever the name given, the aboriginals have always had and still maintain "a high degree of diversity," they have never been "a single undifferentiated people justifying [a] single label" (Spicer 9). As Josephy categorically states, "there is neither a single Indian people nor a single Indian Language, but many different peoples, with different racial characteristics, different cultures, and different languages" (9). In other words, there has never been such a thing as *one* Indian culture, a monolith, as many Euramericans would like to believe and make everyone believe, but a very rich diversity like the colors and patterns in a piece of tapestry or sand painting.

The debate over the proper way to refer to pre-European contact people in the Americas is an ongoing one that signals the controversy not only over a name but also more deeply over the group of people such a name designates. Thus, given the ambiguity of many of the terms that have been used to refer to the people indigenous to today's continental U.S.A., let me clarify the sense of the terms being used in the present work. The term *native* is used in its ethno-historical sense meaning "a group who lived in some place before the arrival of other groups," that is, in the analytical context of the present work, the people inhabiting today's U.S.A. before the arrival of the Europeans. For academic and practical purposes, I will refer to those inhabitants as *Native Americans*, which is the term most widely accepted among scholars. Though the term *Native American* was officially introduced by anthropologists in the early twentieth century as replacement for the negatively loaded term *Indian*, scholars believe the first to use the term was the Mohican John Wannaucon Quinney (1797-1855), who in his memorial to Congress in 1852 called himself "a true Native American" (Lauter 1788).

Generally, the sense in which the term *Indian* or *Native American* has been used rests upon one of two common variables: a cultural or a racial one.

When focusing on the cultural basis, what is considered is whether the person speaks an Indian language, lives in an Indian community, and participates in Indian ceremonies. On the other hand, when focusing on the racial aspect, what is measured is the blood quantum of the person, i.e., whether the person is full-blood, half-blood, or mixed-blood. The cultural-based definition is more commonly used in Latin America, while the race-based one, in Anglo-America, which signals the strong impact racism exerts in the United States of America. As Talbot states, "The tendency to define a person by his racial background rather than by his way of life is one facet of Anglo-American racism" (29).

It is worth bearing in mind that these, among others,[4] are exonyms, white-imposed designations that, at least originally, said little about the identity of the people being referred to because no account was taken of the very different cultural backgrounds of the peoples; that is, no consideration was made of the ethnicity of the individual. Contrarily, to define a person ethnically rather than generically and vaguely as *Indian* offers a very different view; it is an approach that "has the virtue of taking away from whites the power to determine the identity of a person of native descent or affiliation and giving that power to the local tribal community, where in fact belongs" (Forbes 32).

What is signified by a name highly depends on its users. Nowadays, the aboriginal peoples of the Americas have appropriated the term *Indian* redefining it for their political purposes in the ongoing discourse of (de)colonization. On the other hand, non-Indians use the term as "a signifier that comprehends Euramerican responses to the "New World" but has little to do with the native inhabitants of that world" (Owens 7). As a result, a variety of irreconcilable stereotypes have emerged. Since encompassed in a name are the beliefs, ideals, values, conceptions attached to the signifier, the designation *Indian* has served to create a dual system of positive and negative images: a romanticized, idealized one of the good, noble savage and an equally extreme one of the bad, ignoble savage. It is important to be aware of the fact that stereotypes are usually inaccurate and that in the long run they can affect the designees.

---

[4] Some other exonyms are: American Indians (or simply Indians), Amerindians, First Nations, Amerinds, Indigenous Peoples of America.

Nowadays, the designees are asserting themselves with the appropriation of the name assigned turning it into a self-purpose endonym that goes beyond culture or race to touch the fibers of identity. In the essay "The Man Made of Words," Momaday poses that "an Indian is an idea which a given man has of himself. And it is a moral idea, for it accounts for the way in which he reacts to other men and to the world in general. And that idea, in order to be realized completely, has to be expressed" (636). And which a better place to be expressed than in literature!

I.B. Native American Literature

It is hard to imagine trying to understand any group of people without taking into account their own stories of who they are, where they came from, and what they stand for -- their core literary traditions.

Robert M. Nelson[5]

What is meant by Literature in the Native American context? The reality of what and how we perceive depends on our own experience and the richness of our perceptions depends on our open-mindedness. Through a people's literature viewed from those people's perspective, it is possible to comprehend and apprehend the richness inherent in a people's culture and thus bridge the gap between differences among cultures because as Highwater states, "The greatest distance between people is not space but culture" (3).

I adhere to Allen's definition of Literature as being "one facet of a culture" (Sacred 54). Such a conceptualization implies that to approach a given literature, knowledge of the given culture is necessary to the understanding of that culture's literature and its purpose. In Allen's words, "The significance of a literature can be best understood in terms of the culture from which it springs, and the purpose of literature is clear only when the reader understands and accepts the assumptions on which the literature is based" (Sacred 54). But

[5] "Place, Vision, and Identity in Native American Literatures" 1.

before getting deeper into the purpose of Native American literature specifically, let me clarify what is meant by literature in the Native American context.

The sense embodied in the concept of literature is completely dissimilar between Native Americans and non-Native Americans. The aesthetic and artistic value assigned to literature in the non-Native American context is alien to a Native American one, so much so that no Native American language has a word for the concept "art." According to critic Highwater, for Native Americans "everything is art . . . therefore it needs no name" (13). The aesthetic aspect of literature among Native Americans necessarily relates to "utility or integration into daily pursuits" (Allen, Studies x). Besides, fact and fiction are one and the same reality for Native Americans; as Allen states, "within the tribal world . . . many statements that stem from the "imagination" are taken to be literally true, even though they are not based on sociological or historical 'facts'" (Studies ix). Probably ought to this characteristic, Native American literature has been barely accepted as such, or as Owens more strongly puts it, "literature—oral or written—by Indians was . . . universally shuffled aside into the realm of folklore and anthropological "local color" by literary professionals" (16-17).

Native American literature is traditionally oral and communal, that is, it has a collective nature so it is authorless, or to put it differently, it enjoys "collective anonymity" (Owens 10). When it comes to the purpose of traditional Native American literature, Allen has stated that it "is never simply pure self-expression" (Sacred 55); the communal aspect of this literature always runs above the individual one. The aim, through literature, is "to articulate, and share reality, to bring the isolated, private self into harmony and balance with this reality, to verbalize the sense of majesty and reverent mystery of all things, and to actualize, in language, those truths that give humanity its greatest significance and dignity" Allen claims (Sacred 55).

Further, traditional literature can be broadly divided into two basic genres: ceremonial and popular, which can in turn be further divided into subcategories depending on the tribes. Ceremonial literature is sacred in the sense of being powerful; "it is filled with an intangible but very real power or force, for good or bad" Allen asserts (Sacred 72). This type of literature

UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL DE RIO CUARTO BIBLIOTECA

celebrates those experiences considered the most important ones while popular literature celebrates the more commonplace experiences.

Whatever the type, literature in the form of stories plays a central, vital role among Native Americans since they believe "that through the utterance of stories [Native Americans] place [themselves] within and make inhabitable an ordered universe that without stories would be dangerously chaotic" Owens explains and then adds, "The complex webs of language called stories become ceremonial acts performed in order to maintain the world as both knowable and inhabitable" (169). The harmony and unity that Native Americans believe exist in the universe are unavoidably reflected in their traditional literature. That is, the sense of unity among all things, which is essential among Native Americans, is reflected in the harmony of symbol, structure, and articulation of their traditional literature. And as Allen states, the significance of Native American literature "is determined by its relation to creative empowerment, its reflection of tribal understandings, and its relation to the unitary nature of reality" (Sacred 59), which reflects the egalitarian nature in traditional Native American societies.

Being part of the literary tradition, Native American storytelling is oral based on a relational model because both storyteller and listener participate in the narrative thus, reinforcing the communal and creative "production of significations and meanings" (Owens 14); this in turn reflects the polyvocality of the oral tradition and shows that in storytelling context and text are one thing since the inner and outer world are unified through the narrative by the power of words.

In the oral tradition, precisely because words have power, they "function as part of the poetic process of creation, transformation, and restoration" (Hogan 169). The power words and therefore language have is a sacred one, so much so that it allows for the fulfillment of the life of all the beings of the universe when the relationship among all of them is verbalized. In Allen's words, "through the sacred power of utterance [Native Americans] seek to shape the world and mold, to direct and determine, the forces that surround and govern human life and the related lives of all things" (Studies 56). Language is

energy with the power to reestablish the lost and necessary connection and unit of the self with the earth and the universe.

With the above being said, it can be inferred that closely related to the traditional concept of literature is that of language and words as creators of reality with the power to "bring into being" (Owens 9). In the Native American mythology Hogan reminds "the word created the earth" (172). The fact that words have power, both the power of creation and the power of destruction, is crucial among Native Americans. This is a potential in language that needs to be acknowledged for it to be effective. Traditional storytelling acknowledged so. Allen defines storytelling as "a ritual act of creation and generation [as] a way of establishing historical and metaphorical connections between individuals and their universe" (Studies 141). When the creative potential of language is not recognized, language becomes commonplace and loses its power. This is what, in general, the white man has done, as Tosamah in Momaday's House Made of Dawn preaches, "The white man . . . has diluted and multiplied the Word, and words have began to close upon him. He is sated and insensitive; his regard for language—for the Word itself—as an instrument of creation has diminished nearly to the point of no return. It may be that he will perish by the Word" (89).

Through stories, language operates in the mind thanks to its creative power and the power of imagination; text and context are made one. In other words, language "make[s] the world visible, uniting all things into wholeness," this backs up the contention that "Imagination and vision follow language [therefore] description allows seeing" (Allen, Sacred 171), or as Hogan puts it "Words . . . are a materialization of consciousness. And deeds are the manifestation of words" (176).

The role of imagination is really strong among Native Americans. In his essay "The Man Made of Words" Momaday asserts that "We are what we imagine. Our very existence consists in our imagination of ourselves. Our best destiny is to imagine, at least, completely, who and what, and *that* we are. The greatest tragedy that can befall us is to go unimagined" (641). In this context,

"to go unimagined" means not to exist, not to be. In the same essay Momaday asserts,

> The state of human being is an idea, an idea which man has of himself. Only when he is embodied in an idea, and the idea is realized in language, can man take possession of himself . . . man achieves the fullest realization of his humanity in such an art and product of the imagination as literature. (642)

Hence, based on this conceptualization Momaday emphasizes that "man has consummate being in language, and there only" (642).

So close is the language and literature relationship that the eradication of the former brings about the death of the latter, and with it a culture, since there would be no way to accurately refer to the world, to what exists, to all that is. Fortunately, even though persistent attempts by those in power to eradicate both have been made, not all of them have been successful; Native American literature endures and with and through it, Native Americans endure too.

Today's Native American literature is generally based on the oral tradition recognizing the power words have in the process of creation. However, this literature is no longer eminently oral but, on the contrary, written, and it is encoded in a language foreign to that of the original culture. Besides, its audience has changed and widened being composed of Natives and non-Natives; the former with the necessary, privileged knowledge to "naturally" understand and enjoy the literary pieces, the latter with a different cultural knowledge but "with claims to a privileged discourse" (Owens 14). The above stated shows that there is, in words of Owens, an "irreversible metamorphosis from oral, communal literature to the written commodity of published work" (11) with an unavoidable authorial signature though such literature "belongs to" the community because it tells of the original culture and springs from it. As a result, the traditional and the contemporary merge to create a new entity made up of qualities of both. This is an outstanding characteristic of Native American literature: hybridity. Contemporary Native American literature is a hybrid, as its authors are, a fact which, far from being a disadvantage, is a richness because traits of different cultures—Native and non-Native—are seen in light of the

other. In fact, hybridity and crossbreeding are tools to resist and survive. Nowadays, Native American literature has become part and parcel in the resistance to the cultural and thus, the spiritual genocide of the Peoples. This is especially true of contemporary Native American literature written by women.

Henceforth, by Native American literature I mean literature produced by Native Americans and which is about Native Americans and the Native American experience written in a Western performance mode and language, and aimed at both a Native and non-Native reading public.

I.C. Canon Formation, Canon Transformation

The inclusion of Indian literature in the canon of American literature . . . is not only to propose an addition but a reevaluation of what "American literature" means.

Arnold Krupat[6]

Native American Literature, together with the literature produced by other minority groups, is considered an emergent literature though it is the most ancestral literature in the American continent. What makes it "emergent," probably, is its recent acceptance among publishers and consequently the widening of the reading public.

Notwithstanding its age, Native American literature has only recently become the target of literary criticism. Before the mid-twentieth century, cultural anthropology and its subdisciplines ethnography[7] and then ethnopoetics[8] had Native American literature as their "scientific" object of study. Main among the scholars that first studied and sometimes transcribed Native American oral performances into written texts were Franz Boas and Dell Hymens. The late

---

[6] The Voice in the Margin 98.

[7] Ethnography is defined by Nelson as "the attempt to describe--and write out--the unique or characteristic ethos of any ethnic group."

[8] Ethnopoetics is defined by Nelson as "the study of the poetic sense of an ethnic group--as a site where the disciplines of ethnography and literary criticism intersect."

60´s witnessed what literary critic and anthologist Kenneth Lincoln labels the *Native American Renaissance* due to the publishing of literary works about and *by* Native American authors, especially after the Kiowa writer Scott Momaday, referred to by Owens as "the spiritual father of today's Native American writers" (25), received the Pulitzer Prize (1969) for his novel House Made of Dawn (1968). The *Native American Renaissance* contributed to show to the non-Native American world that Native American literature constitutes a rich and ancestrally new field of study per se.

In spite of this, Native American literature was rarely considered to partake in the literary canon, whose formation, since its inception, has been in the hands of an elite of "erudite" made up of white, male, European scholars who rendered Native American literary works a sort of literary apocrypha. Judiciously, critic Arnold Krupat has defined the literary canon as "that body of texts which best performs in the sphere of culture the work of legitimating the prevailing social order" (Voice, 22) hence, the exclusion of literature produced by minorities, the marginalized groups in society that may well disrupt "the prevailing social order." Therefore, despite its renaissance, Native American literature has had little or no room in modern American Literature anthologies or dictionaries of literary and cultural criticism.[9] Even postcolonial literary studies[10] neglect Native American literature completely although these refer to "the Euramerican colonial and postcolonial experience" (Owens 7). Even less or no room at all is conferred to Native American literature written by Native American women.

In The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women edited by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, two very well-known white feminist scholars and critics, only two Native American authoresses are included; Mourning Dove (Okanogan; 1888-1936), the first Native American woman writer to publish a novel, and Leslie Marmon Silko (Laguna-Pueblo; 1948-) whose "Lullaby" (1981) is probably the most anthologized Native American short story, which in

---

[9] Just as an example, Childers and Hentzi's The Columbian Dictionaries of Modern Literary and Cultural Criticism (1995)
[10] Consider for example Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin's revolutionary The Empire Writes Back (1989)

this anthology is the last piece. Whereas Showalter, another well-known white feminist scholar and critic, in the introduction to Modern American Women Writers, a book of which she is an editor, proudly states that "While in most literary histories women authors are still excluded, treated as minor, even bundled with other minorities, this book offers an opportunity to see the diversity and power of American women's writing on its own terms . . . [in this book] women writers come from all kinds of class, ethnic, and regional backgrounds" (ix). Even with such a strong statement in favor of "all" women authors, no single Native American woman author is mentioned in this book. In the same introduction, Showalter stresses the role of the "feminine" in a culture while completely ignoring the Native American woman. She asserts, "Feminine imagination and feminine energy are part of our [American] cultural heritage, and any history of American literature that excludes women's contribution cannot be complete" (xiv-xv). To which it should be added that any history of American literature that excludes Native American women writers' unique contribution fails to tell a truthful, valid (hi)story.

The unquestioned practice of Eurocentrism defined by Tyson as "the use of the European culture as the standard to which other cultures are negatively contrasted" (366) has permitted that the western literary canon be the means by which the dominant group managed to maintain a cultural hegemony based on a non-appellate eurocentric vision of reality and the universe. Every look out of this vision has been considered negative, uncivilized, not learned and therefore, devalued.

In the U.S.A., the literary canon formation with its hegemonic and Eurocentric view went unquestioned particularly up to the pivotal 60´s, which signaled a turning point in the history of that nation. By then, the Civil Rights Movement originated changes in all dimensions of life, plentifully manifested at the intellectual and artistic levels. In the field of aesthetics, chiefly, the hegemony in the canon formation begins to be destabilized in that decade when, among others, diverse groups of minority artists start mobilizing intellectually questioning the western tradition whose conformation and critical theories do not contemplate the particular reality of these groups. Such a

mobilization unveils the fact that in a society conformed by diverse ethnic groups, each one with different cultural, economic, political, and social characteristics, homogeneity is illusory, a trick of the hegemonic power.

The play "The Melting Pot" (1908) by Israel Zangwill provided the era's motto. However, by the 60's, with the Civil Rights Movement and consequent changes at all levels including the rhetorical, "salad bowl" replaced "melting pot" to stress the fact that no one "naturally" melts in the pot but makes up a rich salad. Later, to deepen the changing rhetoric, the culinary assimilation metaphors were replaced by an artistic one: "cultural mosaic," of which the shortened "mosaic" remains today in the 21st century to signal the variety of ethnic groups inhabiting the same land, fitting together on a common base. However, beyond the metaphors, the question remains: is this multiculturalism? True multiculturalism implies consensus, acceptance of differences; it implies multiple cultures co-existing on a common ground, which in the U.S.A. is the "American" ground. In spite of being different from one another, minority groups are all as American as the "majority" is. Hyphenated names call for a greater responsibility with each of the components that, taken together, create synergy, not dissolution. Homogeneity is not desired by the members of those different groups that raise their voices in counter hegemonic discourses that represent their reality, a reality that had been hidden by the dominant discourse per centuries. That is, formerly hidden realities and differences become visible and thus, silences get voiced in the new discourses produced mainly in the literary field.

Literature seems to have been chosen as a suitable arena where the ancient-new voices start telling their (hi)stories. Therefore, the works of ethnic minorities mainly from the 60's onwards become unavoidable ruptures in the canon even though Harold Bloom in his The Western Canon (1994) does not include any Native American author and calls the theorists of minority literature "a School of Resentment whose endless reproaches to Eurocentrism do irremediable damage to what in his subtitle he characterizes as 'the books and school of the ages'" (Cowart). After those eventful years, the academia has witnessed a canon transformation since the canon has been broadening based

on an ethnocentric perspective which makes the literary canon more pluralistic and therefore, more authentic. It is precisely this transformation the following chapters address.

CHAPTER II: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theorizing of the U.S.A-based Argentinean scholar Walter Mignolo on the *modern/colonial world system* brought new light to my explorations on the Native American field due to his emphasis on subaltern knowledge and border gnosis/border thinking. Even though his theorizing concentrates on the experience of subjugated people in Latin America, his thoughts helped me clarify the standpoint from which I want to advance my argument in relation to feminine Native American literature. Besides, though a comprehensive discussion of Mignolo's thoughts would be the topic for another work of a more historic(al)-political nature different from this one, it is important to define the concepts that frame the standpoint from which the whole issue is approached. Hence, Mignolo's conceptualization signals the geohistorical positioning I assume.[11]

Mignolo conceives the world as a system with two faces, a modern one and a colonial one, hence the term *modern/colonial world system*. In this conceptualization, the new commercial circuit between the Mediterranean and the Atlantic that starts in 1492 with Christopher Columbus arrival in "America" marks the geohistorical and political origin of both modernity and coloniality. Under this logic, coloniality has been the necessary condition for modernity; in Mignolo's words, "there is no modernity without coloniality" (43). Thus conceived, Mignolo's double-faced world system presents a visible, overt face, modernity, and unveils a hidden, rejected, covered one, coloniality. In such a structure, the colonial difference emerges clearly. By *colonial difference* Mignolo understands the mechanism used by the hegemonic power, since the first moment of contact in the late fifteenth century to the present, for the subalternization of non-Western knowledge and views, and whose main purpose has been to classify people from a hegemonic perspective underlining

[11] The concepts advanced hereafter in relation to the *modern/colonial world system, colonial difference, coloniality of power* are part of an unpublished paper entitled "Diferencia Colonial: Lugar de Encuentro" co-author with Prof. Valeria Engert and read at the VIII Jornadas de literatura comparada in Mendoza, August 2007.

the difference and thus the falsely logical inferiority of those being classified in order to justify colonization. One of the main concepts for this one-sided classification of the world and its inhabitants has been the ideological conceptualization of the idea of race, an hegemonic invention subservient to the subalternization and subjugation of people; the "darker" the people were, the greater the oppression the "white" could exert on them.

The colonial difference has been imposed by means of the coloniality of power in such a way that it is made to appear as natural and universal. *Coloniality of power*, a concept developed by the Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano (2000), "presupposes the colonial difference as its condition of possibility and as the legitimacy for the subalternization of knowledges and the subjugation of people" (Mignolo 16). This is the power metaphorically described as Eurocentrism due to the geopolitical location of knowledge with the Western expansion starting with Spain and Portugal in the early modern/colonial period (15th –17th century) and continuing with France, Germany, Holland, and England during the second stage of modernization (18th century). Europe (European civilization, European everything) became the measuring stick for the classification of people, cultures after the "discovery" of the so-called New World as if "America" were an empty, identityless land. The possession of alphabetic writing was taken as a marker of civilization and intelligence by the writing-dependant civilized Europeans. Therefore, the false syllogism of considering those peoples without alphabetic writing uncivilized, barbarian, primitive savages. Under this light, those peoples' rich oral traditions, complex and advanced social, political, and religious systems and knowledge were dismissed just because these did not adjust to the European pattern. In other words, paraphrasing Selden and Widdowson, the repressive ethnocentrism of the western culture exerts a centrifugal force that marginalizes or excludes all those nonwestern traditions, lifestyles, and cultural expressions.

Notwithstanding this, among all the colonized territories in the world, America stands in a different, privileged position since, though not considered an equal, America was rendered "the daughter" and "inheritor" of Europe up to the 19th century. The very name assigned to the "new" lands, *Indias*

Occidentales (West Indies), underscores the fact that those lands were seen as an extension of Europe, not as something totally different, though not alike either. However, the "daughter-inheritor" motif vanished when Anglo-America moved from its subaltern position in the world order toward an imperial one in the 19th century. Thus, the United States comes to have a sort of double positioning: former English colony and present world power. This particular condition makes situating the United States of America in the postcolonial mapping not a simple task. Let me cite an interesting paragraph by Mignolo at length to make the point clearer:

> the United States is not easily accepted as a postcolonial/neocolonial country and, consequently, as a reality that could be accounted for in terms of postcolonial theories. Because of its surface postmodern appearance of being the place where postcoloniality found a shelter and because of its deep colonial past, one can say that it all came together in the United States. The difficulty arises not only because of the differences between colonial legacies in the United States and, let's say Jamaica, but also because postcoloniality (both in terms of situation or condition and of discursive and theoretical production) tends to be linked mainly with Third World countries and experiences. The fact seems to be that even if the United States doesn't have the same kind of colonial legacies as Peru or Indonesia, it is nonetheless a consequence of European colonialism and not just one more European country in itself. (97)

The quote above makes reference to a whole country, the U.S.A.; however, our focus is on a specific group of people living there, a minority, the Native Americans, whose situation is completely different from that of not only the majority but of other minorities as well. Then the question arises, in this complex, geohistorical, political mapping, what is, then, the positioning of Native Americans? Native Americans are neither a colony, nor do they live in the Third World (to use the well-known, eurocentric conceptual division of the world signaling the nation-state status after World War II), still, they are considered subaltern, different, an Other. The Spanish sociologist Manuel Castells Oliván (1942-) coined the term *Fourth World* to designate those peoples, living either in the First or the Third World, considered a sub-population whose situation is one of extreme neglect, oppression, subjugation, and exclusion. Unlike the First, Second, Third World conceptual division of the world signaling a nation-

state status, the term Fourth World refers to ethnically or religiously defined groups, to nations without a state. Thus, conceptually, the many aboriginals throughout the globe are considered to be part of the Fourth World, independently of their geographical location.

In the late 18th and early 19th century while the European colonies were getting their independence, Native Americans remained being colonized in their own lands by an old well-known-new master, the emerging Americans. This was a situation that did not change much in the following centuries, which means that the Native Americans undergo *internal colonialism*. The term *internal colonialism* was proposed by the Third World Mexican sociologists Pablo González Casanova and Rodolfo Stavenhagen in the late 1960s "to account for the social realities of their country [specifically] the relationship between the state and the Amerindian population since Mexico independence from Spain in 1821" (Mignolo 104). Though coined in and applied to a different reality,[12] the concept is a proper one to describe the reality of Native Americans in the United States of America. In other words, being the indigenous inhabitants of today's American territory, the Native Americans undergo internal colonialism because they start being subjugated in their own lands by the emerging Americans when the U.S.A. begin to take part in the concert of the imperial nations after removing the hegemonic position of England from the American territory (Mignolo, 2000; Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, 1989; Owens, 1992; Tyson, 1999).

As a result of internal colonialism, the Native Americans come to be *colonial subjects*, without being a colony, and consequently they are victims of the oppressive colonialist ideology inherently racist, classist, and sexist, whose psychological operation on which this ideology is based known as *othering* divides the world into *us*, the civilized ones, and *them*, the savages, the *others* (Tyson, 1999). Though considered the Other, though rejected by those in power, Native Americans have always been there as constitutive part of the

---

[12] As an enlightening note, the term "internal colonialism" did not prosper in the (Western) Academia. Is not this telling of the rejection of a mode of reasoning that does not adjust to the established, "desired" pattern? As Mignolo asserts, "the concept carries the trace of the colonial difference, the subaltern reason" (104).

colonial difference. Nowadays, though it is difficult to dismantle five hundred years of colonial discourse and constant exclusion and neglect, contemporary Native American intellectuals are generating new loci of enunciation where different ways of knowing and knowledge confluence as valid. Though from the coloniality of power, Native Americans have been the colonial object/subject of study, recently they have turned into the producers of knowledge, a type of knowledge that emerges from the cracks of the modern/colonial world system known as border gnosis; in this sense, in words of Mignolo, "Border thinking from the perspective of subalternity is a machine for intellectual decolonization" (45), a decolonization Native American writers are ardently seeking. In this frame, contemporary Native American intellectuals are the result of a changing geohistorical scenario in the Americas with its origins in the 16th century with the advent of the Spanish empire to the 19th century when the United States emerge as new colonial power, which continues to the present. In this context, then, what is the proper theorizing to account for this particular group of people?

The concept of colonial difference is an important one for the analysis of Native American literature since the colonial difference makes reference to a unique space in which opposing forces are at work: an oppressive force that aims at reproducing the coloniality of power silencing and hiding the oppressed, and a liberating force that aims at rearticulating the oppressor-oppressed relationship giving voice to the oppressed. In words of Mignolo, "colonial difference is the space where the restitution of subaltern knowledge is taking place and where border thinking is emerging. . . . the colonial difference creates the conditions for dialogic situations in which a fractured enunciation is enacted from the subaltern perspective as a response to the hegemonic discourse and perspective (2000, ix-x). Border thinking then is a powerful force able to displace hegemonic knowledge from a subaltern perspective. In the same token, though border gnosis is a concept for theoretical criticism born in the social sciences, the concept can be applied in the literary field, as well, due to the "transdisciplinary site of knowledge production" literature is (Mignolo 44).

Under the modern/colonial world system paradigm, postcolonial studies are seen as starting in the 16th century which is "the crucial and constitutive

moment of modernity/coloniality" (Mignolo 37) and not in the 18th century as are usually conceived when the American colonies started getting their independence. Considering the postcolonial as starting in the 18th century with the Enlightenment means to leave America out of the picture; thus the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century is taken as the historical-political starting point for the postcolonial. In this vein, the postcolonial is not seen as a new paradigm but "as part of a larger one [characterized] as border gnosis, an other thinking from and beyond disciplines and the geopolitics of knowledge imbedded in area studies; from and beyond colonial legacies; from and beyond gender divide and sexual prescriptions; from and beyond racial conflicts" (Mignolo 95).

In a broad sense, Mignolo has defined postcolonial theorizing as "a theoretical practice by those who theorize from the situation they have been put in" (109). This suggests that postcolonial theorizing depends on the colonial legacy of the theoretician. Hence, though some well-known names such as Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak constitute the paradigm for postcolonial theorizing, their colonial legacies are quite different from those of the people under discussion here. Native Americans "theorize from the situation they have been put in," one of in(e)ternal colonialism, they usually theorize from their British and U.S.A. colonial legacies; the former, an external legacy, the latter, an internal one. This condition puts Native Americans in a particular postcolonial position. Being part of the Fourth World, nation without state, Native American writers are intellectuals producing border thinking, subaltern knowledge, from a border position, or as Mignolo puts it, "Native Americans in the United States are in a border position not because they moved [as immigrants, expatriates, exiles] but because the world moved to them" (72). Then, if, as Mignolo states, "one of the motivations of postcolonial theorizing is the geohistorical location of the production and distribution of knowledge" (124), Native American writers comply with such a motivation in a special way; probably not because of their postcolonial condition but because they are producing postcolonial discourse. To be fair in the analysis of different voices, it

is indispensable, as Mignolo asserts, "to accentuate the ratio between geohistorical locations and knowledge production" (121).

In the present study, the literary geohistorical, political scenario is conformed by some Native American women writers' short stories of the last decades of the twentieth century. It is worth recalling that traditionally, Native American literature[13] was composed only for the natives in their own languages. Contemporary Native American literature has changed both its audience and its medium since it is composed for a general public that also includes the non-Native, in the written mode, and in a language foreign and strange to that of the original cultures. That is, the English language, formerly considered a colonial imposition, together with the canonical/Western literary forms and medium turn into cultural and political tools for the contemporary Native American writer who lives in and knows about the two cultures. From this perspective, contemporary Native American literature has a mediational[14] quality since it partakes characteristics of two cultures; thus, such literature can be considered bicultural because the writer belongs and participates in the two cultures, the Native and the non-Native American one, and brings both to the text. James Ruppert has clearly stated,

> As the writer strives to bring the oral into the written, the Native American vision into Western thinking, spirit into modern identity, community into society, and myth into modern imagination, he or she is not confined to one cultural framework. While Native American writers do create devastating critiques of European American society, they express wider and deeper concerns than those of social criticism. Nor are they limited to a self-congratulatory view that all the old traditions, the old ways of perceiving are immutable and omnipotent. Contemporary Native American writers insist on their freedom to use the forms and expectations of both Native and Western cultural codes to achieve the goals of each as well as to satisfy the epistemological expectations of both audiences. (7)

---

[13] For a thorough explanation on Native American literature, see section I.B.

[14] James Ruppert has defined *mediation* as "an artistic and conceptual standpoint, constantly flexible, which uses the epistemological frameworks of Native American and Western cultural traditions to illuminate and enrich each other." (3) Though a very interesting concept, mediation is not part of this study; however, it needs to be acknowledged for a better understanding of contemporary Native American literature. Besides it also suggests another line of research in this rich and ongoing field of study.

In other words, Native American literary texts are considered bicultural artifacts produced by a particular type of intellectuals—Native American writers—who, taking advantage of their mediational positioning, utilize their skills to advance their political aims. Following this logic, we can assert with Mignolo that "loci of enunciation are not given but enacted" (115), a task Native American writers comply with admirable energy. Besides, the presence of the two cultures gives Native American literature another distinctive characteristic: hybridity. Native American literature is a growing field of discourse that has served the revitalization of Native Americans as a distinct ethnic group in the last forty years starting with the Native American Renaissance. Contemporary Native American literature, specially the one produced by women, is a fundamental step in the Native American resistance to the cultural and spiritual genocide of the Peoples (Allen, 1996).

Given the singularity and specificity of Native American literature, the theories of analysis and criticism that guide its study are specific to it. Not to fall in the error of judging an originally nonwestern/non-Anglo-American literature in western terms, we will address, mainly, the concepts advanced by the Native American critic and writer Paula Gunn Allen in her extensive and widely recognized book The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions, and Louis Owens's Other Destinies: Understanding the Indian Novel.

However, though not being a "pure" western literature, Native American literature is inserted in a western context, then it is proper to consider some concepts from theories and criticism that dominate the approach of literature in such context. It is important to underline here that these theoretical and critical constructs will be "exported" without losing sight of the fact that they are being applied to a kind of literature for which they have not been designed.

The theories from which some critical concepts will be exported are the postcolonial and feminist theories. The postcolonial literary theory will be considered since this literary criticism has as its object of study the body of literature that has developed as a reaction to the colonial-imperial domination (Tyson, 1999; Ashcroft, Griffith, and Tiffin 1989) of which Native American

literature is a case. As already mentioned, the literature produced by contemporary Native American authors responds to a particular type of colonization: internal colonization. Within the frame of the modern/colonial world system, the postcolonial is understood "to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 2). Contemporary Native American literature is postcolonial literature in the sense that it is a result of the colonial experience with an emphasis on the differences from the colonial power to which aims at reacting.

The Native Americans turned into colonial subjects in their own lands and thus became the Other due to the colonialist ideology imprinted with colonization that stressed "the colonizers' assumption of their own superiority, which they contrasted with the alleged inferiority of indigenous people, the original inhabitants of the lands they invaded" (Tyson, 1999) so damagingly ingrained in Native American mentality. Today, contemporary Native American writers work at reverting such colonialist ideology going back to their pre-colonial culture and times where they find the roots that give strength for survival, continuity, and the (re)construction of a post-colonial identity. Approaching Native American literature from the postcolonial perspective allows for the analysis of both the domination and survival strategies when considering the policies of subjugation and resistance manifested in the literary discourse. It is of main interest to analyze how the literary pieces chosen resist colonialist ideology.

When it comes to feminist theories, critical concepts from these theories will be considered because the works under analysis are works produced by Native American woman writers who offer a different vision from that of the male Native American writer and male writers in general. Besides, as critic Paula Allen asserts,

> A feminist approach to the study and teaching of American Indian life and thought is essential because the area has been dominated by paternalistic, male-dominant modes of consciousness since the first writings about American Indians in the fifteenth century. This male bias has seriously skewed our understanding of tribal life and philosophy,

> distorting it in ways that are sometimes obvious but are most often invisible. (Sacred 222)

Native American woman writers, through their discourse, try to recover the Native American feminine identity, the gynetic identity typical of the native Peoples that was hidden with the establishment of the patriarchal colonialist ideology. Contrary to what happens in other cultures, the marginalization and silencing of women have not been a common state among most of the Peoples whose organization is primarily gynocentric (Allen, 1996). Genre oppression is piece and parcel of the racial oppression (Tyson, 1999) suffered by the Native Americans, among other groups, this is the reason why the Native American woman suffers a double oppression in her own land. Thus, the subjugation of women among the Native Americans is a sequel of colonization; this subjugation is based on the conception of the inferiority of women maintained by the white man in its patriarchal conception of the universe. In this westernized context, the masculine domination of discourse has trapped women within a "universal" male's truth (Selden and Widdowson, 1993) nothing more alien to the gynocentric conception among the Native American cultures that originally granted a central place to the woman. In life as in literature—two sides of the same coin among the Natives—the Native American woman has been the reservoir of the communitarian memory and thus, the axis around which the culture of the Peoples stands. The woman has originally been the storyteller of the ancestral (hi)stories and the "bearer of meaning and tradition" (Allen, Studies 136). Storytelling is traditionally a female function since in the Native American conception "storytelling is a ritual act of re-creation and generation. It is a way of establishing historical and metaphorical connections between individuals and their universe" (Allen, Studies 141). Recapitulating, the Native American context is essentially feminine, it is centered and focused on the woman; to ignore this context, explicitly or implicitly, means to ignore or hide the centrality of women in tribal society, literature, hearts, and minds (Allen, 1996).

To round up, in this study, the literary discourse is considered a means of transmission, preservation, and resistance for the Native American culture. The

short stories by contemporary Native American women are studied as postcolonial discourses that create new critical loci of enunciation, which expose the colonial difference hidden, by the hegemonic discourse; besides, these texts review unidirectional conceptions in order to recover the communal memory and thus define the identity of the Peoples. Furthermore, because literature, as a constitutive element of the social discourse, is a "place where memory is preserved" (Angenot, 1994) the literary texts by Native American women can be read as representations of the cultural memory of the group. Hence, this discourse not only preserves memory but is also a vehicle for the transmission of memory and thus, it turns memory into an object of discovery and knowledge. The concept of memory is understood as a representation of a past that needs to be reassembled with fidelity, a fidelity that is achieved in the responsible act of remembering because the fragility of memory demands responsibility (Ricœur, 1999).

For minority groups like the Native American, the literary discourse is, on the one hand, a narration that invites to remember, to commemorate, and to celebrate the (hi)story and culture of the Peoples and, on the other hand, a bastion of the group in the sense of being a channel of resistance and an opportunity to exert power on a reality, and many a time a (hi)story, that needs to be reverted bringing to light the so long hidden own history. These concepts show that the issue of identity crosses over the discussion on the relation between discourse and memory. This is so since by means of the (re)construction of the cultural memory of a given group through the representations outlined in the group's literary discourse, it seems feasible to define one's own identity and in so doing differentiate oneself from the "Other," whoever this other be. As Linda Hutcheon has pointed out, the dialogue based on the recognition of mutual otherness is a model to deal with the inevitable shock and interpretation of a culture.

Through the analysis and discussion of the selected corpus, I will try to demonstrate whether Native American writers, who are a particular group in a clear border position—culturally, socially, ethnically, and intellectually—with their life and work generate critical loci of enunciation to resist the hegemonic

power and to (re)construct, define, and preserve cultural and self-identity. And I will also try to demonstrate whether the contemporary Native American woman erects as *resistance woman* preserving and transmitting memory and culture through storytelling. This is what the following chapters and sections aim at illustrating.

CHAPTER III: ANALYSIS

III. A. Authoress Choice, Story Choice

The imaginative experience, inspired by the images and symbols of language, becomes a form of salvation.

Linda Hogan[15]

In written Native American literature, the short story is an elusive genre that has its first manifestations at the end of the 19th century. The short story is one of the Western genres that Native Americans have appropriated to advance their plea even when most Native Americans coincide that storytelling was the ideal among Native Americans, a practice that established an intimate relationship between storyteller and audience. As Vizenor comments, "In most Native American literature the book [Western written genres in general] is not embraced but accepted as a necessary evil: story and storytelling are the ideals" (111).

In spite of forcedly embracing the "evil" of foreign medium, form, and genres, Native American writers also remain faithful to their varied traditions which are portrayed in the content and organization[16] of the different stories that reflect the diversity of Native American groups and their varied beliefs and cultures. According to Krupat, what Native American literary texts "teach frequently runs counter to the teaching of the Western tradition, and . . . the ways in which they delight is [*sic*] different from the ways in which the Western tradition has given pleasure" (Voice 54), precisely because of their true Native American nature.

To point to the diversity extant among Native Americans yesterday and today, I selected four authoresses each from a different cultural, social,

---

[15] Studies 172.

[16] For example, the non-linear narrative in the stories represents Native American storytelling tradition.

historical, and geographical background, born of different heritages; some represent groups that through enforced treaties had relinquished their lands to the colonizer and moved west, and others that have stayed with the land since time immemorial. Anna Lee Walters (Pawnee–Otoe-Missouria), Louise Erdrich (Chippewa), Paula Gunn Allen (Laguna Pueblo–Sioux), and Leslie Marmon Silko (Laguna Pueblo). Following the geographic division into culture areas[17] proposed by anthropologists, the selected authoresses represent the Plains / Southeast, Anna Lee Walters; the Midwest, Louise Erdrich; and the Southwest, Paula Gunn Allen and Leslie Marmon Silko. Anna Lee Walters was born in 1946 in Pawnee, Oklahoma to a Pawnee mother and Otoe-Missouria father. The oral traditions of these two cultures have had considerable influence over her writings. Walters is a poet and prose writer. Louise Erdrich was born in 1954, in Little Falls, Minnesota and grew up in Wahpeton, North Dakota where her parents worked for the Bureau of Indian Affairs. She is a novelist, poet, short story writer, essayist, and critic. Paula Gunn Allen was born in 1939 and grew up in Cubero Land Grant in New Mexico. Allen is a well known feminist writer who is highly praised for her creative scholarly works which include poetry, essays, short stories, and novels. Leslie Marmon Silko was born in 1948 in Albuquerque, New Mexico and grew up on the Laguna Pueblo Reservation. Silko is a poet, novelist, short story writer, and essayist. These are unapologetic mixed heritage, half breed authoresses who draw on their respective heritage to create a type of writing that "assert[s] the power of cultural legacies" (Hill 33).

Walters's "The Warriors" makes use of Pawnee myths and traditions. Though not the typical Plains Indians, the Pawnees occupied the so-called Plains culture area. The Pawnee were a matrilineal people. They were a settled, agricultural people, occupying large, relatively permanent villages made

[17] *Culture area* is a controversial concept coined by anthropologists and ethnologists to account for the diversity among Native Americans and to group them in geographic regions in which different "ethnographic groups" share similar cultural characteristics. The controversy resides in the lack of agreement among anthropologists on the different culture areas, and most significantly in the fact that such conceptualization leaves no room for cultural diversity within a specific culture area thus, freezing cultures in time and place. (Bornali Halder 2002; Lobo-Talbot 1998).

up of earth lodges. In the 19th century, epidemics of smallpox and cholera wiped out most of the Pawnees, reducing the population to approximately 600 by the year 1900; as of 2005, there were approximately 2,500 Pawnees. Erdrich's "Fleur" falls back on the Chippewas or Ojibwas. The Ojibwas, an Algonquian tribe, inhabited the Midwest. The Europeans called them Chippewas, a name that has been appropriated by contemporary Native Americans from Ojibwa descent. "They had an estimated population of 25,000 most of them nomadic hunters and fishermen who lived too far north to depend to a great extent on agriculture" (Josephy 80). Allen's "Tough Love" is a story set in contemporary U.S.A. that reflects what happens among Native American people in most tribes. Silko's "Lullaby" draws on the Navajo or Navaho (Diné) ancestry. The Navajos were matrilineal clans who practiced agriculture learned from the Pueblos; today "Navahos live on the largest reservation in the United States" (Josephy 172). And Silko's "Yellow Woman" resorts to the traditional Laguna Pueblo Yellow Woman myth. Laguna is a census-designated place in Cibola County, New Mexico. The population was 423 at the 2000 census. The Pueblos were matrilineal clans that depended on agriculture. Contrary to so many Native American groups who were torn away from their ancestral land, they were never removed or relocated.

Though each Native American group has its unique cosmology, they share certain beliefs; among these there is "a recognition of the spirit power of words and stories" (Trout 76), the power of storytelling to conquer estrangement, which is achieved through imagination and memory. That is, stories are the connection with ancestors who help "'remember' things not known consciously, because [stories] are imagination and memory" (Hill 32).

III. A. 1. "The Warriors": A Battle for Beauty

"The Warriors" (1985) by Pawnee-Otoe-Missouria writer Anna Lee Walters, first appeared in Walters's eight-short-story volume *The Sun Is Not Merciful*. This short story is the fictional biography of uncle Ralph, a Pawnee "from a fine family, an old line of warriors" (729), told from the perspective of his eldest niece, who is reminiscent of the meaningful time spent with Uncle Ralph during his increasingly sporadic visits to his family. Set in our times, the story revolves around the conflict between traditional tribal values and contemporary values, a conflict that can destroy a person even when the person is a *warrior*. In spite of this at-first-sight gloomy theme, the story offers a hopeful note with the young generation's realization that a warrior's "battle is for beauty" (730).

Uncle Ralph, a member of the Pawnee, a war People, represents a timeless contemporary-traditional warrior whose mentality is set on war. Ralph's traditional Pawnee war is for beauty, the preservation of a culture, his; but he cannot fight alone, thus he instills the value of tradition in his young nieces, the next Pawnee generation. Simultaneously, the contemporary warrior is being defeated by the hard fist of colonization tangibly manifested in exclusion, rejection, and alcohol. A prey of colonization, he cannot cope with the burdens of non-Native contemporary life; he seems to have "been born into the wrong time [when] the Pawnees had been ravaged so often by then" (721). Uncle Ralph is "trapped in a transparent bubble of a new time. The bubble bound him tight as it blew around [his family, especially his nieces]" (721); he is being suffocated with the trappings of a non-Pawnee, non-Native, present cunningly filled with government policies aiming at disseminating everything "*Indian*."

However, this seemingly defeated warrior, though finally dying, outlives in his nieces when he passes on the Pawnee tradition to them. Thus, he teaches them Pawnee words, drums and sings Pawnee war dance songs—Uncle Ralph "was only one of a few who knew the old ways and the songs [a drummer that knew] all [the] old songs." (725)—reconstructs the Pawnee war annals—"He

knew intimate details of every battle the Pawnees ever fought since Pawnee time began" (721)—and tells his nieces stories. Contrary to the narrator's statement that "he could have disciplined us [her sister and her] if he so desired . . . But he never did" (721), he does discipline them transmitting the Pawnee heritage. In other words, though he cannot fight against the social ill—alcohol—that is physically killing him, he does not surrender and keeps on fighting for the survival of the Pawnee culture in his nieces, the next generation of Pawnee warriors, mainly through stories.

The allusion to the two Pawnee myths[19]—the Pahukatawa war myth and the Evening Star and the Morning Star creation myth—stresses the connection between the ancient oral tradition and (hi)story, and contemporary life, while portraying the balancing of death (war) and life (birth) forces in the Native American mentality. The Pahukatawa myth is a Skidi Pawnee version based on the historical Pawnee warrior Pahukatawa, who in about 1830 after being captured, tortured, killed, and mutilated by Sioux enemies, reemerges with the help of animals (the Nahu'rac) that restore his body except for his skull and brains that no one can find. After his physical restoration, Pahukatawa cures his mother and helps his people in war spying on the enemy. To do so, Pahukatawa turns into a wolf, a symbol of war among the Pawnees. At a point during his service to the Pawnees, Pahukatawa feels betrayed when he is not treated as a demi-god as he had asked and stops helping them. Because his is a warrior spirit, Pahukatawa has the need to assist a warrior tribe, thus he turns to the Pawnee's rivals, the Rees, leaving the Pawnees increasingly powerless. The other myth, the Evening Star and the Morning Star myth, being a creation myth, refers to origins, to life, and thus stresses hope. The mating of both Stars results in the birth of the first human being, who is female. The Pawnee creation myth identifies the first human as female. The fact that Uncle Ralph retells the myths to his nieces underscores both the imprint of the past for the Pawnees (and any Native American, we could say) and his warrior nature manifested in the everyday fight for continuance grounded on memory. Uncle

---

[19] The accounts of the Pahukatawa myth and the Evening Star and the Morning Star myth have been taken from by Marc Steinberg's essay "Myth, folk tale and ritual in Anna Lee Walters's 'The Warriors'" and Gill and Sullivan's *Dictionary of Native American Mythology*.

Ralph incarnates both myths in being a warrior struggling for survival and in *giving birth* to a faithful generation of Pawnee warriors, female warriors, who have understood that the "battle is for beauty."

Uncle Ralph tells her nieces that "warriors must brave all storms and odds and stand their ground" probably unconsciously realizing, as his nieces consciously did, that "Uncle Ralph had a great battlefield of his own" (721). Though being a warrior, he cannot brave the storm of alcohol, a challenging battlefield of survival that leads him to enlist to a different warrior type, the hobos, a type of contemporary warrior who braves storms for survival. As Uncle Ralph himself explains to his nieces, "hobos are a different kind. They see things in a different way. Them hobos are kind of like us. We're not like other people in some ways and yet we are. It has to do with what you see and feel and when you look at this old world" (722). In defining the hobos, Uncle Ralph defines himself, the Pawnees, and by extension, Native Americans. In fact, he eventually turns into one of the hobos. He got the hobo's look and appearance: "He was haggard and tired ... looked years older than his age" (726). "He'd acquired a vacant look in his eyes. ... He wore a similar careless array of clothing and carried no property with him at all" (728). Walters's artful analogy between Pawnee warriors and contemporary hobos can be extended to Native Americans in general since most of them have "crept ... wandered ... leaped ... hid ... traveled" (721) and eventually survived thanks to an anchorage to roots.

The traditional-contemporary warrior keeps on fighting aiding his promising People—his nieces—through retellings of Pawnee traditions with the hope of not being betrayed; his fight is for beauty, harmony, the transmission of values, the Pawnee heritage no one seems to care about any longer. As Uncle Ralph states with dissatisfaction, "No one believes in the old ways anymore. They want to believe when it's convenient, when it doesn't cost them anything and they get something in return. There are no more believers. There are no more warriors. They are all gone" (727). This contemporary Pahukatawa is sure to live again through his nieces' dreams as the mythical "*Pahukatawa* lived and died and lived again through another's dreams" (728). During Uncle

Ralph's last visit, the niece-narrator asserts to him that she remembers everything he has taught and recites everything to him. Though "moved by [his niece's] recitation," he makes an extra observation to assure the teaching has been internalized and thus, continuity guaranteed: "It's more than this. It's more than just repeating words. You know that, don't you?" (728). The nieces do know. After Uncle Ralph's death, the narrator-niece makes and assertive proclamation to her sister: "To live beautifully from day to day is a battle all the way. The things that he knew are so beautiful. And to feel and know that kind of beauty is the reason that we should live at all. Uncle Ralph said so" (730).

Because he feels like a frustrated warrior born in a wrong time and who "just can't go on" (727), because he "couldn't make it work [even though he] tried to fit the pieces" (728) and "tried to live what [he has] been taught, but (...) some things [went] all wrong!" (727), Uncle Ralph's last words to his niece turn into a plea: "Don't forget what I've told you all these years. It's the only chance not to become what everyone else is. Do you understand?" (729). His insistence to his nieces on not forgetting the Pawnee world—the Pawnee stories, the Pawnee heritage, the niece's Pawnee name, Pumpkin Flower—stresses the faith placed on his nieces' memory, on his nieces' strength in keeping with the survival battle and reaffirmation of the Pawnee identity. He has appointed his nieces inheritors of the Pawnee legacy restored in each meaningful recitation that fits the pieces together.

His existence has been like his "stories of life and death ... fierce and gentle" (721) and eventually, Uncle Ralph turns into one of those "warriors [who] dangled in delicate balance" (721). The young Pawnee female narrator understands that the key to survival is remembering those stories that help keeping roots, identity, and believing them, especially in a time when "Everyone questions. Everyone doubts" (727). And because "women [can] be warriors too" (729), it is not surprising that the marvelous legacy of tradition be left to women young ones, who this timeless contemporary-traditional warrior considers strong enough to care for "the old ways," to keep them alive, and to resist in the battle for beauty.

III. A. 2. "Fleur": (A) Woman Blossom

"Fleur" (1986), by Chippewa authoress Louise Erdrich, is a 1986 distinguished short story and a 1987 O. Henry Awards first-place winner short story that later turned into the second chapter of Erdrich's novel *Tracks* (1988). "Fleur" is the story of "the beautiful wild witch of Matchimanito" Lake, Fleur Pillager, "the sole survivor of her family of traditional Chippewas, feared for their knowledge of 'medicine'" (Owens 214). Like all of Erdrich's stories, "Fleur" is, in spite of all the terrible destruction we witness in the story, about survival stressed with the theme of female power.

Fleur survives twice after drowning "in the cold and glassy waters of Lake Turcot" (2562). The first time, Fleur "was only a girl" and was saved by two men who later dissapeared (2562). The second time, she "was twenty years old" and no one saved her. However, when "she washed onshore," George Many Women went closer, noticed her chest moved and was suddenly warned by a black-eyed hissing Fleur he would "take [her] place," which in fact he did, years later drowning in his new bathtub in spite of having being cautious because of Fleur's words. For the old women at the reservation those men's fate "figured . . . all right. By saving Fleur Pillager, those . . . men had lost themselves" (2563). The drownings and their aftermath showed people that they "were dealing with something much more serious" (2563).

The people at the reservation understood that "Misshepeshu, the waterman, the monster, wanted her for himself" (2562) because she was young, beautiful, "strong and daring" (2563). That is, they believed that when Fleur went into the lake, she encountered the underwater monster and survived, which is suggestive of her mythic reality. Early in the story, we are told that "death by drowning [provoked by Misshepeshu is] the death a Chippewa cannot survive. Unless you are Fleur Pillager" (2563), which explains Fleur's survival while at the same time hints superhuman characteristics in Fleur. Thus, because of that realisation and the fact that Fleur's behavior went contrary to what the community expected after those tragic events, people wanted Fleur

out of the reservation. Instead of "keep[ing] to herself, liv[ing] quiet, . . . and keep[ing] the good ways" (2563), Fleur turns "haywire, out of control. She messed up with evil, laughed at the old women's advice, and dressed like a man. She got herself into some half-forgotten medicine, studied ways we shouldn't talk about" (2563). These attitudes and the metamorphosical descriptions of Fleur[19] depict Fleur's non-conformist attitude and singularity that save her and make her a powerful woman. She eventually leaves the reservation on her own accord.

The main story in "Fleur" spins off the reservation in Argus during the summer of 1920, a date that, Owens states, signals a "crucial moment in history when the Chippewa began to see with a grim finality the last portion of their traditional lives slipping rapidly away" (212) due to disease, starvation, unfair federal policies, and displacement. Argus is a small North Dakota town of about 300 inhabitants, where "almost nothing ever happened" (2565), till Fleur arrived and "gave them a subject" (2565) with her consistent one-dollar winning at card play and lastly when "everything in Argus fell apart and got turned upside down, smashed, and thoroughly wrecked" (2570) as a result of a tornado the day after Fleur's rape by her three white co-workers at Kozka's Meats, Lily Veddar, Tor Grunewald, and Dutch James, who were ignorant of Fleur's past, "were blinded . . . stupid, they only saw [Fleur] in the flesh" (2565).

We learn about Fleur through the eyes of the shy, appearently naïve mixed-blood Chippewa Pauline, who tells the story about a year after the above mentioned tragic events took place. Pauline plays the role of an almost omniscient narrator because she is present without being visible to anyone except for Fleur, which suggests a woman bond. Pauline herself states that she "was invisible" at Kozka's Meats, Argus butcher shop. Pauline explains her invisibility while portraying herself, "I blended into the stained brown walls, a skinny, big-nosed girl with staring eyes. Because I could fade into a corner or

---

[19]Along the story Fleur is described as if she were an animal, "half-tamed, but only half" (2565) with "braids ... thick like the tails of animals" (2565); like a dog, "She shivered all over like a dog" (2563); a snake, "she hissed," "no one knows how she dragged herself home" (2563), a bear, "By night we heard her chuffing cough, the bear cough" (2563); a fish, "her hips fishlike, slippery, narrow" (2565); and a wolf, "She turned, looked straight at me, and grinned the white wolf grin" (2566).

squeeze beneath a shelf, I knew everything, what the men said when no one was around, and what they did to Fleur" (2564). Pauline is at first afraid of Fleur, as everyone else is; however, after the realisation that Fleur notices her and takes care of her, Pauline is "no longer afraid of [Fleur], but followed her close, stayed with her, became her moving shadow that the men never noticed, the shadow that could have saved her" (2567). Though Pauline thinks otherwise, in fact she does help Fleur achieve her aim of taking revenge on the three men that had raped her by "slamm[ing] down the great iron bar that fit[ted] across the hasp and lock[ing]" (2570) "the heavy doors of the lockers" (2569) as a respose to the "cry . . . whistle and . . . shrill scream" that built in the wind and "spoke plain" (2569) in the stillness that followed the tornado.

Pauline's account of Fleur's story in Argus ends with the tornado "fair-minded disaster" (2570) and its aftermath and the numbing scene of the three men found frozen dead. Then, the narrator spins back to the present, about a year after the tragic Argus summer, and we learn of the birth of a green-eyed, "color-of-an-old-penny skin" girl to Fleur who has gone back to the reservation and "lives quiet ... down on Lake Turcot with her boat" (2571). Pauline has also "come home" (2571). As Pauline reflects almost at the end of the story: "The blood draws us back, as if it runs through the vein of earth" (2571).

Erdrich's "Fleur" stresses survival in spite of the "destruction" portrayed and suggested at different levels: physical—people, Argus—and ideological—men's attitude toward women. In the voice of the young narrator, Erdrich accounts for the patriarchal ideology on the inferiority of women when reccounting the men's attitude and thought about Fleur: "Lily couldn't believe, first of all, that a *woman* could be *smart enough* to play cards, but even if she was, that she would then be *stupid enough* to cheat for a dollar a night" (2567, emphasis added) while Tor's pejorative assertion "we know one thing ... the squaw can't bluff" (2566) adds a colonialist note to the story, revealing the white man's view of women, a Native American woman in this case. But Fleur is of a different sort, and they cannot beat her and *that* is what enrages them to the point of planning "with the eyes things they couldn't say aloud" (2568). Contrary

to their expectations, the men's assault does not beat Fleur but themselves losing their own life.

Fleur's card-combat winning parrallels Fleur's life-combat success. Fleur outrivals the patriarchal colonialist power. She survives thanks to her attachment to her Chippewa heritage, to her Chippewa power:

> power travels in the bloodlines, handed out before birth. It comes down through the hands, which in the Pillagers were strong and knotted, bit, spidery, and rough, with sensitive fingerstips good for dealing cards. It comes through the eyes, too, belligerent, darkest brown, the eyes of those in the bear clan, impolite as they gaze directly at a person. (2571)

Fleur does not bluff, she is authentic in a seemingly ambiguous world of truth and rumor, fiction and fantasy. That is what makes her strong and confuses everyone because they cannot get the right story so they "talk, turning the story over. It comes up different every time and has no ending, no beginning. They get the middle wrong too. They only know they don´t know anything" (2571) as it many a time happens with Native American (hi)story.

Erdrich's stress on survival after the destruction attempts points to the continuity proper among Native Americans. The attempts to destroy Fleur, her survival and continuity are a cycle that seems to resemble Native Americans post-contact "natural" cycle.

Fleur survives many times: after drowning twice, again after the brutal assault of her three male co-workers, and again, and again, and again through each retelling of her story as a never withering woman blossom.

III. A. 3. "Tough Love" : A Mother's Fertile Drought

"Tough Love" by Laguna Pueblo writer Paula Gunn Allen appeared in Earth Power Coming, a collection of (39) short stories by Native American authors edited by Simon J. Ortiz in 1983. "Tough Love" is a fragmented narrative set in contemporary U.S.A. by mid-September with the final snapshot in November at a conference during a panel presentation entitled "Getting Over Your Loved One's Drinking" (213). The story is about a young man's struggle to cope with a life turning increasingly difficult due to alcohol and consequent violence, low self-esteem, and social rejection, and a woman's fight against alcohol and consequent violence, especially against women. The narrative starts in medias res with an impersonal "It" pervasively present, "right there," but also "clawing and tearing, [t]rying to get out" thoughout the narrative in which the information is given in pieces instilling curiosity about the characters and their life—past, present, and future—a curiosity that is satisfied almost at the end of the story (the "real" beginning) when we learn that the "it" is a "despairing ache ... snarling hopelessly" (211) in the male protagonist.

The main characters are just pronoun-referred at the beginning, as if we were already acquainted with them, to later be introduced by their name, Charley and Margaret, son and mother. Charley's reminiscences of his attempt of suicide in L.A. and the circumstances around it while walking alone during a windy and cloudy Albuquerque morning after a violent fight with his pregnant wife, Polly, parallels the story about Margaret, Charley's mother, who works at the Alcohol Abuse Center in Albuquerque as a very active counselor, conference organizer and attendant. Though Charley's dramatic story dominates the narrative, Margaret's part in it is by far the most overwhelming. As a counselor, she knows the theories, however, when confronted with her son's problem with alcohol, theories shake, as she desperately expresses to her friend and co-worker Alice, "I know the theories, damn it . . . But theory's one thing and my boy is something else. What am I gonna do!" (207).

The compelling story of Bill Pretty Bear is the linkage between Charley and Margaret's stories. Bill Pretty Bear is the huge Native American with "hands . . . as big as sledge hammers" (200) speaker at the Indian Health Conferences that tells about his experience with drinking, "how it made him crazy, beating up on his wife, getting in brawls, the whole story" (198) and about the way his wife rescued him when she "made him see what he was doing" (200). In a violent night he had arrived home drunk, his wife, being fed up, finally hit him over and over while chant-like repeating "'You stupid, mean drunk. You stupid, mean, cruel drunk. You get out. You just get out'" till "there was blood everywhere" (201). He had to go to the hospital by himself; in the meanwhile, his wife and children were gone. After that terrible night and subsequent morning when women from both families came home to warn him he would not see his wife and children again unless he improved his behavior and did something to overcome his alcohol problem and consequent violence, Bill Pretty Bear and other alcoholic men suffering the same problem formed a support group, "a rap group to try and stop the cycle" (198). The group proved useful since, though the drinking did not stop completely, the violence toward their wives did. It has been women that saved him, rescued him. His and his wife's woman relatives made him realize he was destroying his life and the life of those closely related to him, a situation that was not to be allowed any longer. They clearly stated that "they had all decided that if some of the men wanted to kill themselves on liquor, that was their choice. But that no one was going to help them destroy themselves anymore" (202). This attitude shows women's determination. Besides, his wife's strength in acting as she did makes Bill Pretty Bear see her "a lot bigger than [him], even if she's only five feet tall and weights only ninety-five pounds" (214), he comments to the audience.

The women's bondage is what helps them keep strong and resist overwhelming social ills, which are totally alien to the original culture as is the case of the violence toward women among the Native Americans. Such a women's bondage is strong among the three co-workers and friends in the story: Leona Lucero who is an Isleta widow and a mother of three, Alice Graham, a Comanche, and the protagonist, Margaret, a mother of two, who is

also a Native American but whose affiliation is never mentioned; this fact might suggest that she represents every nation's struggling woman. The narrator tells that "The women took care of each other . . . using joking and jibing to convey love and concern. It worked. The one who was getting the kidding got a chance to get mad, to snap, to defend herself, to just get rid of some of the tension that came with living and with the work they did" (200). This bondage is really useful to Margaret the morning after the long night talk with Charley when she learns about his son's attempt of suicide in L.A. as what he thought was a way out for his drinking, drugs, and violence. At the Center, after hearing the story, Alice proposes to "get together after work . . . and just talk;" though at first hesitant, Margaret accepts because she knows that "she really needed to talk this out if she was going to be of any use to Charley or herself" (207).

In the meanwhile, out in the streets, the reminiscent Charley is enraged. He "punched . . . at the memory of the past few hours. Polly bleeding, screaming at him" (212). Charley feels lonely, "he was parched and aimless" (208), uneasy and confused; "what am I doing here anyway?" (203), he wonders. He feels so alienated and disconnected in the city and in life that he tries to find an anchorage in nature. While on the Albuquerque streets, "he looked sideways, glowering at the west mesa that rose several miles away from him on his left. . . . Tilting his head lower toward his left shoulder, he glared for a second at the tall peaks that made the eastern boundary of the city" (196). But Charley finds no balm in nature, a nature that seems indifferent to his desperate state, "Grey and towering, the peaks stood, completely oblivious to his glance and his rage" (196).

Charley's self-esteem and self-reliance lower because the fist of colonization has gripped him. The colonizer's created image of the *good-for-nothing Indian* makes him really feel he is "a nogood bum" (212); he has internalised the socially imposed image of the "bloodthirsty savage treating women cruelly" (Allen, Sacred 192) that goes against the Native American culture. This image confrontation has created an internal conflict that had led him to see no hope in existance and attempt suicide by cutting his wrists:

> It was the bottom. . . .His rage washing over him like sheets of rain. . . . getting madder and madder. Raging at himself, at what he'd become, what he'd done. The Black man was right. He was a drunk Indian. He was a no-good bum. Just like they wanted him to be. He obeyed them after all, didn't he? . . . When he had ripped everything in sight and smashed what he couldn't rip, he stood in the middle of the room, staring around. "It's no good, man," he said. . . . And he was filled with sorrow and revulsion. For his life. For what he lived. For what he was. (210-211)

And in Charley's case too, as in Bill Pretty Bear's, it was a woman that came to the rescue. Polly had saved him: "She came in and stopped him from destroying everything that was left. And they call the mental health squad" (206). However, that terrible incident did not mark the end of either drinking or violence. Though he tried, "reached out over and over. Loved [and] Cared" (208), he relapsed; "there he was, going into bars, walking up to strangers, punching them, belligerent. . . . he kept getting beat up. He kept losing jobs. Getting fire. Getting eased out" (209). At the same time, the low self-esteem makes Charley want to be in control, a need he is aware of: "He reflected how important it was for him to have a small creature relying on him. Looking at him with trust. Looking up to him" (209). When that control is lost, violence unleashes, especially toward those more vulnerable. In L.A. Charley "had lost control" (208) and killed the kitten he so fondly cared of, now in Albuquerque he had lost control and hurt Polly who reminds him of the kitten, "soft and helpless" (208).

Alcohol almost always inevitably leads to violence, violence to women, someone apparently weaker. But that violence is sometimes like a boomerang that comes back with renewed force. After the violent fight with Polly and remembering what he had done, "He ached with unshed tears for the kitten, for Polly, for himself" (209).

Bill Pretty Bear's story and the woman speaker at the November conference, who states that "you can't control someone else's life so you might as well not try. What works is for the co-alcoholic to get control over her own life by finding real things to do that make her feel stronger" (213), strengthens Margaret in her fight to help her son. She understands that a mother's

protection does not mean a mother's choice-making for her offsprings. She understands Alice's words who firmly had told her, "I don't think you are making his choices for him, about drinking, or cutting his wrists, or getting into fights, or for the better choices he makes either" (206). She reassures herself the power she has, together with the other women, in fighting back alcoholism and its damaging consequences. Margaret's initial confusing feelings—"She didn't know whether to laugh with delight or weep with despair" (197)—when learning on the phone that her son is at home after a year of not knowing about him are clearly hopeful now.

Once we piece the omniscient focus-shifting narrative together, we understand Charley's Albuquerque walk along the dark memories of his alcohol violent and suicidal past back to his mother's apartment as a symbolic journey back to origins; and Margaret's fight for the alcohol oppressed at the Alcohol Abuse Center as a heroic, vitalizing enterprise for her and for her People. Pieces finally seem to fit in this life puzzle; pieces safely fit once their right place is found. Charley "hurried . . . back to the way he'd come. His feet were icy from the cold. He thought about being *inside*, in his mother's apartment, *warm and safe*, making things work out, making everything come out alright" (212, emphasis added). The recurrent Native American theme of "going back home" to define oneself is suggested here. Home can be metaphorically taken as going back to origins, back to roots, back to the Mother's womb to be reborn and make a new start, to start anew, dry, in a fertile drought.

III. A. 4. “Lullaby” : A Lull For The Soul

“Lullaby” (1974) by Leslie Silko was first published in both *Chicago Review* and *Yardbird Reader* to later become the second story in the well-known Silko's *Storyteller* (1981). “Lullaby” is a lyrical short story told by a limited omniscient narrator from the perspective of the female protagonist, Ayah. The story that centers around Ayah's present snowy winter evening journey on foot to find her husband, Chato, is interspersed with her memories of a past that extends back to her childhood. The setting is U.S.A. Southwest, Cebolleta and its surroundings precisely; with the present time being around the mid-twentieth century after World War II. However, the outstanding setting is Ayah's mind in the winter of her life. Structurally, the story is framed within two (healing) songs. The story opens with the allusion to the Yeibechei song, a song of healing of the Navajo Night Chant, which is one of the many Navajo healing ceremonies, and closes with a lullaby Navajo women sing to their children to put them to sleep, here meant to provide comfort for the dying husband. Thus, “Lullaby” is a story of reminiscences of death, of losses at diverse levels—people, culture, language, tradition—all of them due to the white's intrusion—the white rancher, the white doctors, the white social worker women—in the Native American culture, with a note of hope given in the parallel reminiscences of old women weaving, of birth giving, and the final actual singing of the traditional lullaby, in which the voice is that of tradition.

Ayah's reminiscences are the small narratives of the past, a pervasive past, woven in the overarching narrative of Ayah's present, the freezing walk to Azzie's Bar in search for her husband Chato who is drinking himself to death. Ayah turns to be the only survivor of her Navajo family. She has not surrendered to the white fist in any of its disguises. She has taken in the advice of “the old ones [who] told her [that] learning their language or any of their ways endangered you” (393). In fact, language, whose power is to create according to the Native American conception, is central in the story of Ayah's experiences not as a life conferring but as a loss-perpetuating source; it is the colonizer's

language. Being the white's language, English is seen as treacherous by Ayah. Directly or indirectly, because of the English language, she lost her three children and husband. The "yellow piece of paper" reporting Jimmie's death is in English; her little knowledge of English—Chato has taught her how to sign her name—makes her give the white doctors the right to take Danny and Ella away without knowing she is so doing; "All of Chato's fine-sounding English talk" it is worth nothing neither when Chato gets ill nor when he is considered too old to work for the white rancher any longer and they are both evicted.

These tragic memories unveil several social and political issues aimed against Native Americans. A racial issue evidenced in the disproportionately large numbers of Native Americans that were made to serve the U.S.A. army during World War II (Trout 389). Native Americans died faithfully fighting for the nation that so unfairly has oppressed and almost disseminated them. A health-social issue, alcoholism, the dead end of a being alienated, turned into a stranger to himself, who has lost connection with the world around and that cannot accept he has been used as an object: "the white rancher told Chato he was too old to work for him anymore, and Chato and his old woman should be out of the shack by the next afternoon because the rancher had hired new people to work there. That had satisfied her. To see how the white man repaid Chato's years of loyalty and work" (393). Chato would eventually spend all the welfare money in wine while becoming a stranger also to his wife. A social issue in the U.S.A. government incessant attempts to disseminate Native Americans by removing Native American children from their families to a white environment with the consequent splitting up of families and the loss of their language and thus culture. That is, the loss of a language results in alienation from the traditional culture. Ayah knows this and realizes of this fact during her children's last visit. "Ayah . . . knew they were already being weaned from these lava hills and from this sky. . . . When [Danny] tried to answer her, he could not seem to remember and he spoke English words with the Navajo" (394). Ayah's pain was so hard at the realization that when they left she "turned away [and] did not say good-bye" (395). At the same time, Ayah's coercive signing away of her two children symbolizes the no less coercive and also

cunning signing of "treaties" between Native Americans and Anglo-Americans to the clear benefit of the latter.

However, even though language can be a marker of domination, it can also be a marker of restoration and survival as suggestively shown with the lullaby, both its lyrics and the actual singing, which stresses Ayah's strong communion with nature. At the same time, Ayah's essential connection with nature suggests her bond to cultural roots and tradition, a correlation that saves her and consequently, in and through her, the culture is preserved. Evidenced here is the Navajo view of the essential harmony that exists in the universe. As explained in Trout, "The Navajos view their universe as a single, orderly system, full of powers that are good when under control, but that may be evil when uncontrolled" (IM-36) thus the need of healing ceremonies. Singing the lullaby, Ayah attains the *hozho*[20] state, a state of being that brings peace, happiness, and plenty (Trout 122). The lullaby that closes the story and lends it its title comes full circle to *all* beginnings representing the passing of oral tradition, and the wisdom embedded in it, from generation to generation of Native American women. This fact is so strong that even when Ayah "could not remember if she had ever sung it to her children, . . . she knew that her grandmother had sung it and her mother had sung it" (396). Besides, the lullaby lyrics stress "the perfect harmony that exists in nature, the universe, . . . a harmony that invites to see that life and death are not beginning and end, but just mere parts of one natural cycle" based on continuity (Paruzzo 129) because "there never was a time when this / was not so" (396).

Ayah survives because she is balanced, which allows her to nurture, in spite of losses, as nature nurtures. She survives thanks to her memories, her anchorage and fidelity to her cultural heritage and belief system though being immersed in the Anglo-American world. Ayah's reminiscences also offer her relief, "She felt peaceful remembering" (391), and the farther the memories, the more clearly they are seen and more comforting they become. Thus she thinks

---

[20] According to the *Dictionary of Native American Mythology*, Hozho is beauty and order, a central religious concept. The order of the world is one in which inner and outer forms are in balance, complement each other—east complements west, north complements south, men complement women, etc. (128).

of her mother and grandmother weaving blankets and the warmth those blankets provided,

> she (Ayah) thought about the weaving and the way her mother had done it. . . . She had been only a little girl when her grandma gave her the wooden combs to pull the twigs and burrs from the raw, freshly washed wool. And while she combed the wool, her grandma sat beside her, spinning a silvery strand of yarn around the smooth cedar spindle. Her mother worked at the loom with yarns dyed bright yellow and red and gold. She watched them dye the yarn in boiling black pots full of beeweed petals, juniper berries, and sage. The blankets her mother made were soft and woven so tight that rain rolled off them like birds' feathers. Ayah remembered sleeping warm on cold windy nights, wrapped in her mother's blankets on the hogan's sandy floor. (390)

This memory stresses the importance of weaving among the Navajos and alludes to *Spider Woman* who is the one "responsible for teaching weaving to human beings" (Gill and Sullivan 282). Such allusion is further articulated when Ayah is at the bar and the men there "feared her" (395) and "looked at her like she was a spider crawling slowly across the room . . . she could feel the fear" (394) which satisfied her while confirming that her faithfulness to tradition has endowed her with power, a power that assured her "there was nothing anyone could do to her now" (395).

Ayah's hard "walk in the deep snow" (394) is a hard walk in the deep memories of her life losses. And though "she felt the air burn in her lungs" (394) and sometimes her pain had been so intense "there was no room . . . for her lungs to fill with air (393), she endures. She becomes a *resistance woman*. Though the traditional lullaby in the story lulls a grown up man in fetal position to death, the beautiful lyrics and hopeful message of survival, endurance, and continuity transcend the story and therefore, become a lull for the soul.

III. A. 5. "Yellow Woman": The Perennially Changing Woman Myth

"Yellow Woman" by Leslie Marmon Silko, published in the 1974 anthology The Man to Send Rain Clouds: Contemporary Stories by American Indians, edited by Kenneth Rosen, is a contemporary retelling of a traditional Native American oral narrative of which there are a diversity of versions. "Yellow Woman" is a time immemorial story in the Native American tradition of the Keres of Laguna and Acoma Pueblos in New Mexico that makes reference to the myth of Kochinnenako, Yellow Woman, which, due to the fact that the Keres attribute the color yellow[22] to women, in some sense means Woman-Woman. When it comes to themes, these are varied: "abduction, meeting with happy powerful spirits, getting power from the spirit worlds and returning it to the people, refusing to marry" (Allen, Sacred 226) among others. Notwithstanding the type, Allen explains in The Sacred Hoop that all Yellow Woman stories "are always female-centered, always told from Yellow Woman's point of view" (226).

Silko's "Yellow Woman" is closer to the abduction version in which Yellow Woman is abducted by a ka'tsina spirit.[23] Silko's version, set in contemporary time, starts in medias res with the female nameless narrator about to leave the stranger with whom she has spent the night by the river next to her village; but Silva, the stranger, effortlessly takes ("abducts") her to his place up in the mountains. This modern Laguna Pueblo wife and mother to whom Silva refers to as Yellow Woman is incredulous of the possibility of Yellow Woman stories to happen in modern times; however, as she goes up the mountain, she starts wondering on her and Silva's identity: "if Yellow Woman had known who she was—if she knew that she would become part of the stories. Maybe she'd had

---

[22] The symbolism of colours and their association with cardinal directions are important storytelling devices but out of the scope of this analysis. I just refer to the symbolism of this colour (yellow) because of its pertinence to the focus of this analysis.

[23] In the Pueblo people mythology, the ka'tsina or kachina is a beneficent anthropomorphic spirit being associated with rain and water. The Ka'tsina mediate between the human and the spiritual worlds. In traditional stories, the ka'tsina is sometimes seen abducting a woman who later returns to her community and is endowed with special powers. (Fidel Fajardo-Acosta, 2001; and Gill and Sullivan, 1992).

another name that her husband and relatives called her so that only the ka'tsina from the north and the storytellers would know her as Yellow Woman" (35). Eventually, after a violent incident with a white rancher, she is forced to return home. While passing by the place near the river where the narrator first met Silva, she longs to be back with Silva and hopes him to come back for her as he promised.

Though apparently cut off from her culture—the protagonist insists "the old stories about the ka'tsina spirit and Yellow Woman can't mean us" (35), "What they tell in stories was real only then, back in time immemorial, like they say" (36)—the narrator eventually reconnects to her roots by means of the time immemorial "Yellow Woman" story she heard many times told by her now dead Grandfather when she was a child and her connection with her Peoples' mythical past was a natural one. As a grown-up, she lives in a state of liminality, a state she realizes of when herself experiencing the Yellow Woman story. This state of liminality is a result of colonization the young suffer most since, influenced by western thinking, they want to separate "fact" from "fiction" and thus go against their traditional thinking in which no division exists between the two. They can only cope with the two states of existence when they recognize *that* is the necessary, sometimes uncomfortable, state for those who survive and endure.

The narrator and protagonist of the story inhabits, at first confusingly, in between two worlds, everyday life and the mythic history of her people, what I refer to as *ordinary reality* and *mythic reality*, both equally "real" for Native Americans. The protagonist's ordinary reality is her family—mother, grandmother, husband, baby—the house, the village, the walks along the river, and a disbelief of those stories "real only then, back in time immemorial" (36). Though the narrator recognizes her lore when stating that her "old grandpa liked to tell those stories [Yellow Woman's] best" (35), she thinks of them as belonging to the past, a past irreconcilable with her modern times. While the mythic reality is her gradual recognition of the pervasive reality of mythical (hi)stories, especially, in this case, the Yellow Woman stories, the ones "old grandpa liked to tell . . . best" (35); a gradual recognition that manifests itself in

doubts. The narrator reflects, "I will see someone, eventually I will see someone, and then I will be certain that he is only a man—some man from nearby—and I will be sure that I am not Yellow Woman. Because she is from out of time past and I live now" (36).

So strong is her ordinary reality that she cannot recognize herself as Yellow Woman at first; she reflects that Yellow Woman "is from time past" (36) and that she lives in a time when women go to "school," "there are highways and pickup trucks" (36), Silva wears "Levis" (37), there is "Jell-o" (45), all markers, both for the narrator and readers, of modern life. At the beginning, when doubtful of her reality, the protagonist assertively states, "*I don't believe it*. Those stories couldn't happen now" (37, emphasis added), to later, at the end, when acquiring the knowledge of her mythic reality, equally assertively, affirm, "I told myself, because *I believe it*, he [Silva] will come back sometime and be waiting again by the river" (45, emphasis added).

Borders, the story physical setting, a place where boundaries blur, emphasize the liminal position of the narrator/protagonist. While in the mountains, Silva points to her female companion that from his place he "can see the world'. . . . 'The Navajo reservation begins over there.' He pointed to the east. 'The Pueblo boundaries are over here.' He looked below us to the south, where the narrow trail seemed to come from. 'The Texans have their ranches over there, starting with that Valley, the Concho Valley. The Mexicans run some cattle over there too'" (38). This blurring of borderlines in turn metaphorically suggests the blurring divisive line between mythic and ordinary realities, between past and present.

At a point of her gradual recognition process, the narrator realizes that her Grandfather would have understood because he knew (hi)stories are true, they happen "today." She considers that "if old Grandpa weren't dead he would tell them [her family] what happened—he would laugh and say, "Stolen by a ka'tsina, a mountain spirit. She'll come home—they usually do" (41). At the same time, she recognizes herself as part of a new Yellow Woman story, "there will be a story about the day I disappeared while I was walking along the river. Silva had come for me; he said he had. I did not decide to go. I just went" (41);

as they say it happens in the stories. This way, both realities—mythic and ordinary—are reconciled in and with this perennial story. Besides, the setting in the mountains, a natural, modernity-untouched landscape, suggests timelessness and mythic knowledge. Paradoxically set in modern times, the story is in fact timeless because it relates (to) a myth; myths have no time or place, or better stated, myths are *achronotopic* realities.[24] The storytelling tradition transcends time. When getting back home, the narrator has reconnected with her roots through the Yellow Woman story; in a similar fashion, the storyteller reconnects the Native American audience with roots, the ever present (hi)stories, while at the same time teaches the non-Native audience about the importance of stories in recovering roots and identity.

Borrowing Silko's phrase, Yellow Woman's has been "a journey of awareness and imagination," a journey Natives and non-Natives are invited to undergo (qtd. in Cohen 2), especially women since for Silko all women are Yellow Woman. The invitation is to act as Yellow Woman does in the story in spite of ambiguities. Allen has stated that "Kochinnenako's part in the process is agency" (Sacred 242) and that

> In many ways Kochinnenako is a role model, though she possesses some behaviors that are not likely to occur in many of the women who hear the stories. She is, one might say, the Spirit of Woman.
>
> The stories do not necessarily imply that difference is punishable; on the contrary, it is often her very difference that makes her special adventures possible, and these adventures often have happy outcomes for Kochinnenako and for her people. This is significant among a people who value conformity and propriety above almost everything. It suggests that the behavior of women, at least at certain times or under certain circumstances, must be improper or nonconformist for the greater good of the whole. (Sacred 227)

Leslie Silko recreates the Yellow Woman story in our times to show the ever-present reality of myths among Native Americans. As Owens states, "Silko, like a traditional storyteller, is remaking the story, reforming it, molding it to fit new situations and times. She is not inventing it" (170). The revision of

---

[24] I define this term as a "reality" with no specific, concrete time or place.

the old Keres tale has the value of *retelling*. As Silko has stated in an interview with Kim Barnes: "Every time a story is told, and this is one of the beauties of the oral tradition, each telling is a new and unique story, even if it's repeated word for word by the same teller sitting in the same chair" (qtd. in Cohen 1). Silko's retelling of the ancient myth aims at critiquing and transforming reality. The wealth Yellow Woman and "Yellow Woman" bring to the community is the vital reconnection with traditions, with the ever present mythic reality of the Peoples through the acknowledgement of the fact that stories are dynamically perennial, as the perennially Changing Woman myth.

CHAPTER IV: DISCUSSION

IV.A. Appropriated Form, Medium, and Language

To understand and comprehend Native American literature and thus the Native American world, it is necessary to make a turn of mind, to tune us in the frequency of a world that has been speaking a clear message since its origins. We need to leave aside our westernized minds in order to enter into the world of *All-That-Is*, into the world where we are all related. We need to bring back, in words of Frederick Turner, "some remnant of the imaginative powers [we] had before home, church, school, and occupation attempted in their several ways to standardize [our] mind" (24).

An understanding of Native American literature implies to understand a way of life, a particular way of apprehending the universe completely alien to the western way; it implies to leave aside the patriarchal programming of eurocentric origin and to tune in the frequency of an apparently alien world where everything and everyone are related in complementary and harmonic links. In the act of interpreting and understanding, ignorance or oversight perhaps be the worst enemy. As Chicana writer and critic Gloria Anzaldúa posits, "Ignorance splits people" (86). It is important to recall that since the first moment of contact between the "Old" and the "New" continent there is an error: the continent "discovered" was not India and consequently their inhabitants were not Indians. Thus, the starting point of the Native American history told by westerners is a misconception. From there onward, the (hi)stories told by the westerners on the inhabitants of the "new" lands have been product and cause of innumerable and various distortions that move away from true knowledge and therefore attempt against the culture and identity of the aboriginal Peoples. This error marks the beginning of the first battle in the fight for an "Indian"[25] identity, a fight of centuries of oppression, subjugation, and displacement, a fight in which the best weapon has proven to be tradition. Keeping and transmitting tradition mainly through stories "hold[ing] fast to the traditional belief

[25] See section I.A. "What's in a Name?"

in the very real power of the word" (Owens 22), has helped the "Indian" to survive.

Stories are the means through which Native Americans learn and remember who they are. Silenced, not mute, Native Americans have a voice and want to make it heard; as Turner claims, "after hundred of years of being written about the Indian writes back" (3). And s/he does so with a strength and vitality that allows, in Allen's terms, the necessary *re-membering* of identity. For contemporary Native American authors writing is "a process of reconstruction, of self-discovery and cultural recovery" (Owens 5). This complex task is carried out both in a non-Native American genre and language. As already discussed,[26] traditional Native American literature is oral, communal, and authorless, thus the "commodity" Native American writers produce is totally foreign to their original culture, so is the language in which it is produced. In relation to the last fact Owens explains, "For behind the modern Indian author's fluent mastery of English lies a centuries-old history of assimilation, not merely the painful, forced assimilation of a marginalized people into the cultural mainstream . . . but also the assimilation of "alien" discourse by an oppressed people" (12). Nowadays, far from being a weakness, this characteristic makes contemporary Native American literature unique in its uniqueness. Critic Arnold Krupat in The Voice in the Margin has proposed the category of *Indigenous literature* to refer to "that type of writing produced when an author of subaltern cultural identification manages successfully to merge forms internal to his cultural formation with forms external to it, but pressing upon, even seeking to delegitimate it" (214). *Indigenous literature* is a new, hybrid Native American literature that was given birth, during the Native American Renaissance in the late sixtieth, by Native American mixed blood authors who attempted to re-member a Native American identity "invoking and incorporating the world found within the oral tradition [in] the written commodity of published work" (Owens 11) and who write both for Native Americans of different nations and non-Natives alike.

---

[26] See section I.B. "Native American Literature"

Writing in a "foreign" mode does not mean that there is a compliance with the rules and principles of the Academia but, on the contrary, a subversive use of the tools the Academia offers to forward the message of the "other." The subversiveness of Native American literature in part results from the hybridization of the discourse. With this subversiveness, center and periphery modify their positions; those in the margins are mobilized actively toward the center, which no longer holds (Hutcheon, 1988). As Owens clearly explains,

> the American Indian writer places the Eurocentric reader on the outside, as "other," while the Indian reader (a comparatively small audience) is granted, for the first time, a privileged position. On the one hand, by consciously identifying her- or himself as "Indian" the writer seeks to establish a basis for authoritative, or externally persuasive, discourse; on the other hand, the writer must make that discourse internally persuasive for the non-Indian reader unaccustomed to peripherality. At the same time, the writer is appropriating an essentially "other" language and thus entering into dialogue with the language itself. The result of this exquisite balancing act is a matrix of incredible heteroglossia and linguistic torsions and *an intensely political situation*. (14-15, emphasis added)

Further, as suggested by Owens above, this subversiveness points to another characteristic of Native American literature, in fact of all minority literatures: its political stance. The appropriation of genres and language thought of as cultural capital has served the political purpose of creating a counter-discourse to the national meta-narrative.

Contemporary Native American literary pieces are the new loci of enunciation created in the interstices of the modern/colonial world system. These are critical loci of enunciation enacted by Native American writers who make the most of their unique crossbred position cross-pollinating both the Native and non-Native culture. That is, the blending of the non-Native and Native American cultures is taken as a strength and as a form of survival by Native American writers.

The stories under consideration in the present work are taken as political statements written by strong Native American women who have appropriated the "enemy tongue," English, to advance their Native American views and let them be known by both Natives and non-Natives. They have taken out the

enemy tongue to voice their plea, to counteract years of silence with an ancient new counter discourse. These authoresses (re)create stories of resistance in the sense that they "resist the United States' history of oppression and marginalization on Native peoples" (Hollarh 22), subversively utilizing the oppressor's weapons to transcend colonization.

IV.B. Beyond Colonization
IV.B.1. Back to Myth - Forward to Women

The quinticentenary is already far behind and subjugation persists. Indigenous peoples in the Americas declared October 11 "the last day of freedom" (Mignolo 24), where "freedom is . . . the fundamental right to *be* [oneself]" (Highwater 172). In view of this lack of "freedom," Native American writers have undertaken the difficult task of dismantling five hundred years of colonial discourse, constant exclusion, neglect, silencing, and theft with their literary pieces generating new loci of enunciation. Two of the authoresses whose work is under analysis here, in interviews, have explicitly referred to the role of Native American writers, which simultaneously suggests these writers' political agenda. Louise Erdrich states that "Contemporary Native American writers have . . . a task quite different from that of other writers. . . . In the light of the enormous loss, they must tell the stories of contemporary survivors while protecting and celebrating the cores of cultures left in the wake of the catastrophe (cultural annihilation)" (qtd. in Owens 193). While Leslie Silko asserts that "it is more effective to write a story like "Lullaby" than to rant and rave. I think it is more effective in reaching people . . . Certainly for me the most effective political statement I could make is in my art work" (Seyersted 24).

In a broad sense, colonization means the assault to and consequent loss of a culture, the cultural values that make and sustain a community. Among others, the enforced loss of native languages through enforced attendance to missionary off-reservation Indian schools, where only English was allowed, has played an important role in the cultural genocide of the Peoples. For example

Ayah, in "Lullaby," is a first-sight witness to the loss of the Navajo culture in her children after the dramatic forced removal by white doctors. However dramatic this loss can be, the most damaging of the imperial conquests has been on the mind of the peoples, the hardest conquest to unleash, heal, and revitalize. This is precisely the target of contemporary Native American intellectuals who aim at (re)conquering the minds of the Peoples pointing to the colonial difference for centuries veiled by the hegemonic discourse. Native American critical loci of enunciation generate in the interstices of the modern/colonial world system where Native American intellectuals "dwell." From this "border position not because they moved but because the world moved to them" (Mignolo 72), Native Americans produce border thinking, which, Mignolo states, "from the perspective of subalternity is a machine for intellectual decolonization" (45). Thus, for Native Americans, border thinking turns into an anciently new way to cope with life in post-Columbus times.

Native American writers know that restoration rests on memory, roots, the ever-present heritage of tradition bestowed on the landscape and transmitted through stories. Briefly stated, to heal the almost lethal ideological illnesses instilled by the conqueror, it is necessary to return to the fountains of life springing from tradition and extract from it renewed meaning. Probably due to "shockingly untraditional modern interpretation[s]" (Allen, Sacred 240) by translators, interpreters, anthropologists, and ethnographers that have so greatly altered and damaged (traditional) Native American cultures, Native American writers have chosen to follow a "mythical" path that aims at recovering the seemingly lost culture and achieve "freedom." In general, no direct protest is found as regard oppression, dislocation, or cultural dissolution. As Allen eloquently states in The Sacred Hoop,

> American Indians in general have more often than not refused to engage in protest in their politics as in their fiction and poetry. They have chosen rather to focus on their own customs and traditions and to ignore the white man as much as possible. As a result they have been able to resist effectively both colonization and genocide. (82)

Why choosing myth to advance contemporary political issues? Vickery states that myth is a "culture's earliest mode of responding to its world" (68). In Native American cosmologies, myths abound. They are constituent of the Native American belief system.[27] In contemporary Native American literature, myths not only serve as sources but they also show the actuality of myths while emphasizing continuity with cultural origins among contemporary Native Americans. The writers' departure from the conventions of realism are meant "to recreate the sense of reality that their tribal forebears traditionally held" (Velie 313) when there was no division between fact and fiction; when the miraculous was part of history. Contemporary Native American writers, Velie states, "think like other Americans in their daily lives, but recreate the old order in their fiction" (314).

Allusions to myths in contemporary Native American literature have a double purpose. On the one hand, the purpose is to invite non-Natives to get acquainted with Native mythology to better understand meaning and consequently to learn more about the Native American culture. As Dell Hymes states in relation to Native American literatures, "the material requires some understanding of a way of life" (qtd. in Owens 29). On the other hand, the purpose is to advance political aims within the proper cultural heritage though using the "enemy tongue," which in fact becomes an allied in serving two important Native American aims: resistance and survival through continuity with cultural origins.

Owens states that the Native American writer relies upon "traditional mythology as an informing structural principle" (257), a knowledge the non-Native does not possess but whose lack does not prevent meaning making. No doubt, in words of Owens, "Native American writers are offering a way of looking at the world that is new to Western culture" (29). For instance, the Pueblo People (Keres) would know the basic story of Yellow Woman who meets a Katsina, mountain spirit, by the river and is abducted by him and taken away from her community to later return with some wealth for the community.

---

[27]The topic of myths in the Native American world is a very interesting one but out of in-depth, comprehensive analysis in this work.

Thus, the short story "Yellow Woman" by Silko would have different depths of meanings for Native and non-Native readers. However, thanks to the mediational position of the Native American writer, the story reaches both audiences in meaningful ways. Whatever the case, what is shown in this story is that Yellow Woman—representing those who do not believe any longer, who doubt, who question—is disconnected; however, as she experiences the mythic reality, she starts believing and fights for beauty, she lulls the soul, turns into a woman blossom, a *resistance woman*.

Both the colonialist ideology, centered on the invented concept of "race," which subsumes everyone under the false supremacy of the "white," who in fact represents those in power, and the patriarchal ideology, centered on the conceptualization of gender based on the idea of the inferiority of women in relation to men, have damagingly altered the Native American social system which has been predominantly gynocentric and thus, egalitarian. In a gynocratic society or gynarchy, the woman is at the center of society, such tribal societies are then matrilocal, matrifocal, and matrilineal. This does not mean woman domination of men, the reverse of patriarchy; on the contrary, gynarchy underscores egalitarianism, even distribution of goods, services, and status; balance and complementarity at all levels. When it comes to tribally constructed gender roles, no hierarchy of gender exists but rather an equal regard for the roles and work of each. That is, there is gender complementarity. The centrality of the female role in the community then, is not one of supremacy or domination but one "of stability and importance . . . perceived as a creative force, one with Mother Earth, the ultimate living deity . . . represent continuity and completeness . . . perform important function in the perpetuation of the tribe" (Allen, Studies 135).

After contact, the essential balance and harmony of gynocratic Native American life was broken as a result of European contact and colonisation with its/the unavoidable totally alien patriarchal impositions that "disorder[ed] harmonious social and spiritual relationships" in the gynocratic Native American societies (Sacred 240). Women were displaced from the center, which,

consequently, could no longer hold. Thus, the displacement came with the patriarchalization of the Nations, therefore, women started losing their honored status. Halder succintly makes the point clear,

> Across the continent, female leaders were forbidden by the US to participate in any of the treaty negotiations that took place between the US and indigenous nations. Finally, the US forbade women to take up political roles in the administering of reservation governance also. By the turn of the 20th century, it appeared that the disempowerment of Indian women within Indian societies was complete. (3)

Fortunately "the disempowerment of Indian women within Indian societies" just *appeared* to be complete since especially in the late 70s and 80s organizations led by Native American women were formed to denounce the several injustices Native American people suffered under white domination. Some of the notorious organization in those days were *Indigenous Women's Network*, *The Northwest Indian Women's Circle* and, probably the best-known of all, *Women of All Red Nations*.

Those organizations should not be considered feminist movements in the Anglo-American view stressing the gender problem, but rather a woman movement stressing the race problem affecting Native Americans of all communities. Lorelei DeCora Means, one of the founders of Women of All Red Nations, clearly expresses the position of Native American women in the struggle for decolonization:

> We are American Indian women, in that order. We are oppressed, first and foremost, as American Indians, as peoples colonized by the United States of America, not as women. As Indians, we can never forget that. Our survival, the survival of every one of us - man, woman and child - *as Indians* depends on it. Decolonization is the agenda, the whole agenda, and until it is accomplished, it is the *only* agenda that counts for American Indians. It will take every one of us - every single one of us - to get the job done. We haven't got the time, energy or resources for anything else while our lands are being destroyed and our children are dying of avoidable diseases and malnutrition. So we tend to view those who come to us wanting to form alliances on the basis of "new" and "different" or "broader" and "more important" issues to be a little less than friends, especially since

> most of them come from the Euroamerican population which benefits most directly from our ongoing colonization. (qtd. in Halder 7)

The feminist movement is more often than not rejected by Native American woman activists because they consider it an extension or another face of the long established racist and colonialist mentality among white men and women alike since no feminist theory, practice, or movement address Native American colonization. To go beyond colonization, it is essential to return to traditions, to recover the balance, harmony distorted with colonization reassigning women "their role as vitalizers" (Allen, Sacred 27).

Traditionally, before contact, Native American women valued and were valued for their role as vitalizers at the level of both biology and thought, a role which has been hampered with colonization. It is precisely the thought level that Native American female writers aim at revitalizing. Their writing is a subversive tool. In the telling of stories, they advance political statements, as Gloria Bird's (Spokane), who has convincingly stated, "That we are still here as native women in itself is a political statement," to what "Joy Harjo (Muscogee Creek) has reaffirmingly added, "We are still here, still telling stories, still singing whether it be in our native languages or in the 'enemy' tongue" (qtd. in Hollrah 33). Native Americans no longer allow being silenced. They voice their "truth" in the reconstruction process of writing through which contemporary Native American woman writers try to heal the wounds of colonization reshaping traditional literature, going back to myths and making them work meaningfully in the contemporary world. As Allen states, "they are reworking ancient beliefs and traditional structures as they continue the process of articulating American Indian experience. Indian women of the twentieth century are speaking in their own voices and out of [their] living cultures" (Studies 143).

IV.C. Women's Power

A people is not conquered until the hearts of the women are on the ground.
Cheyenne statement

Anna Lee Walters (Otto-Pawnee), Louise Erdrich (Chippewa), Paula Allen (Laguna Pueblo/Sioux), and Leslie Marmon Silko (Laguna Pueblo) are twentieth century woman writers who speak "in their own voices and out of [their] living cultures" (Allen, Studies 143). Though coming from different Native American nations, all of these authoresses have the same plight/ predicament. Like traditional Native American women in gynocratic cultures, these contemporary storytellers bear meaning and tradition with their stories since they acknowledge the fact that women bear "the responsibility for preserving and using oral tradition" (Allen, Sacred 207). All the stories—Louise Erdrich's "Fleur," Paula Allen's "Tough Love," and Leslie Silko's "Lullaby" and "Yellow Woman,"—but one—Anna Lee Walters's "The Warriors—have a woman as protagonist, Fleur Pillager, Margaret, Ayah, Yellow Woman(?) respectively. The only story with a male protagonist features a weakened male protagonist who anchors the continuity of life, his and his People's, in two young female characters, his nieces.

Though quite different in origin, nature, and content, the short stories stress the power Native American women have as opposed to the pitiful portrayal of men. Men are presented as aimless and alcoholic. Uncle Ralph is disillusioned and cannot cope with the poignant disbelief in modern times; Lily, Tor, and Dutch drink and turn to violence when they cannot control Fleur in another way; Charley is "parched and aimless" (208) because he has internalized the colonizing *good-for-nothing-Indian* image and thus has taken refuge in alcohol; Chato drinks out his welfare check as a consequence of dismissal and eviction after years of loyalty to a white rancher. All the alcoholic men portrayed in the stories are, in a sense, stereotypical in that each represents a man who could do so much good, except for the alcoholism that destroys his life; this is an old story that has been told many times. However,

when this story concerns Native American men, as is the case of Uncle Ralph, Charley, and Chato, the story is not so old, thus not a traditional one either among Native Americans but a story of the negative effects of colonization on Native Americans. In the stories under analysis, alcohol is a response to the alienation these men have been led to feel. In fact, the pejorative term "Whisky Indian" was the appellation for "the destroyed and impoverished survivor who had lost his home, tribal life, means of sustenance, and cultural standards, and lacking motivation . . . sought escape in alcohol" (Josephy 6).

Colonially induced despair is the label given by Native and non-Native scholars and activists to the dispair provoked by those conditions—alcoholism, suicide, poverty, substance abuse, violence toward women, children, and the elderly—foreign to traditional, pre-contact Native American culture (Halder, 2002). Critic and scholar Paula Allen offers her particular view on the present situation among Native Americans and how the situation particularly affects women,

> Often it is said that the increase of violence against women is the result of various sociological factors such as oppression, racism, poverty, hopelessness, emasculation of men, and loss of male self-esteem as their place within traditional society has been systematically destroyed by increasing urbanization, industrialization, and institutionalization, but seldom do we notice that for the past forty to fifty years, American popular media have depicted American Indian men as bloodthirsty savages treating women cruelly. While traditional Indian men seldom did any such thing—and in fact amongst most tribes abuse of women was simply unthinkable, as was abuse of children or the aged—the lie about "usual" male Indian behavior seems to have taken root and now bears its brutal and bitter fruit. (Sacred 192)

When it comes to the power traditionally assigned to women, Native Americans believe the power Native American women have springs precisely from their womanness. Native Americans believe that women, because of their female nature, fecundity, and acquaintance with blood, have a special power. Traditionally, all members acknowledged the women's central position in tribal life. No one doubted or questioned "the proper place of Woman as creatrix and shaper of existence in the tribe and on the earth" (Allen, Sacred 30). This was so before colonization threw its almost lethal fist.

Women in general, be they Native or non-Native, especially those assigned a "minority" status, are presently engaged in a process of self-(re)definition. In the case of Native American women, this self-(re)definition involves the reconciliation of traditional, pre-contact and modern postcolonial views on Native American women. Thus, at the core of the definition is tribal identity. As Allen states, the Native American woman's "destiny is necessarily that of her people, and her sense of herself as woman is first and foremost prescribed by her tribe" (Sacred 43). In spite of the existing diversity among tribes and consequently different views on women and their role, no one tribe neglects the power women have, a power that is naturally embedded in women's femininity. Thus, among the different Nations, women are taken in high esteem. Whichever negative view, it comes from a non-Native perspective on women whose colonialist and patriarchal angle has detrimentally changed the axis of interpretation. Hence, the many concerted attempts to overturn them completely. However, the power women have cannot be easily destroyed because, as Erdrich exposes in "Fleur," "power travels in the bloodlines, handed out before birth" (2571).

The stories analyzed in the present work portray women in situation of power: a power granted by someone ("The Warriors"), acknowledged by the community ("Fleur"), self-recognized ("Tough Love"), based on tribal beliefs ("Lullaby"), granted by myths ("Yellow Woman"). In spite of depicting most of the social ills—alcoholism, unemployment, children removal from their families and thus cultures, poverty, estrangement caused by non-tribal ways of life, government tragic policies to deal with the "Indian problem"—suffered by "real" Native Americans throughout the United States, these stories have a positive valence in that they ultimately stress Native American women's power at different levels, namely, at "continuity, adaptation, and survival" (Hollrah 34). In the preface to his anthology Earth Power Coming, Ortiz asserts that "it has been through the words of the songs, the prayers, the stories that the people have found a way to continue, for life to go on" (vii). These present-day stories help to make peace with the past, which is a necessary step for a peaceful future.

The continuity achieved in the literary discourse and field reflects the continuity kept in the everyday field, which in turn reflects the traditional female principle of permanence, continuance, that is to say, in Allen's words, "the traditions of the women have, since time immemorial, been centered on continuance, just as those of men have been centered on transitoriness . . . the female principle is permanent, it remains . . . . is what continues, what stays" (Sacred 267). This principle is portrayed in the stories with/through the female characters that remain, stay, and continue.

Nonetheless, in this continuity, adaptation is necessary at the human and thus, literary level. In fact, one of the distinguishing characteristics of traditional literature is adaptability, which has proven to be dynamic in contemporary Native American literature in which non-Native (Western) and Native literary forms merge. The result is a rich hybrid that cross-pollinates the field. The resultant literature "carr[ies] on the oral tradition at many levels, furthering and nourishing it and being furthered and nourished by it" (Allen, Sacred 79). For this to happen, the traditional material needs to be adapted properly to fit the contemporary context. As Owens states, "stories evolve to meet new conditions and needs" (184). This is precisely what the contemporary Native American writers under analysis have done in their stories that evoke myths and traditional Native beliefs. These are adapted to fit the contemporary non-Native context without losing the traditional value and meaning they have had since time immemorial.

As for survival, the stories under analysis here testify to the ongoing survival of Native American women, not only in the stories but also in life, through literature. The ongoing characteristic is paradoxically highlighted with the anachronism of the stories. This anachronism has a twofold significance: it points to the Native American conception of time which is conceived as cyclical, a kind of eternal present, and it "allows" each story to be about Native Americans of all nations and of all times. "Fleur" is the sole story that makes direct reference to time (1920), probably because that is the year that signals the worst of times for the Chippewa's traditional lives due to disruptive government policies. These contemporary Native American short stories make

peace with a recovered past in an ongoing present that (re)creates a meaningful future and thus, survive.

A common denominator in these stories is the power the protagonists have, in spite of all odds, which helps in resisting hegemonic oppression while preserving and transmitting their culture. In all the stories, despite their many differences, there is a pervasive presence: the audibly silent voice of the main female characters whose strength reaches out far beyond the text. These women's power is rooted in their bond to tradition and thus fidelity to their female role of caretaker. The power of these women has been: inherited, as it happens to Uncle Ralph's nieces, never forgotten as in the case of Fleur, Margaret, and Ayah, recovered as with Yellow Woman. These women are powerful women representing all Native American women who have not been buffeted by the dominant culture's cunning plans against them and their respective cultures. Allen makes a strong political statement in relation to the strength of today's Native American women,

> American Indian women struggle on every front for the survival of our children, our self-respect, our value systems, and our way of life. The past five hundred years testify to our skill at waging this struggle: for all the varied weapons of extinction pointed at our heads, we endure. We survive war and conquest; we survive colonization, acculturation, assimilation; we survive beating, rape, starvation, mutilation, sterilization, abandonment, neglect, death of our children, our loved ones, destruction of our land, our homes, our past, and our future. We survive, and we do more than just survive. We bond, we care, we fight, we teach, we nurse, we bear, we feed, we earn, we laugh, we love, we hang in there, no matter what. (Sacred 190)

Approached from a female axis, these stories offer hope, not only for Native American women but also for the whole Native American community since the stress is on continuity and survival "no matter what." Besides, consistent with the Native American conception of language and therefore storytelling, it is valid to affirm that the means is empowering. Because stories are woven in language, these have the power to shape reality, and storytelling has the inherent power of healing, protecting from evils, restoring harmony; i.e., storytelling is a ceremonial act to integrate broken parts and achieve the

essential unity in the universe alleged by Native Americans. In this vein then, stories have the power to shape reality and whenever possible, restore harmony. Because storytelling empowers, the hearing of Bill Pretty Bear's story, for example, empowers Margaret to keep on coping with her life and in so doing, help his son. These short stories, which are just some sample threads in the big tapestry of the Native American world, furnish us with an idea of the central place women have always had in the Native American world despite colonialist impositions to the contrary. For deeply rooted Native American women, the women's centrality and power is an everlasting state. Native American writer Leslie Silko explains her life long outlook on women's capacities in a talk with Donna Perry,

> I never thought that women weren't as strong as men, as able as men or as valid as men. I was pretty old before I really started running into mainstream culture's attitudes about women. And because I never internalized the oppressor's attitude, I never behaved in a passive, helpless way. Instead of being crushed by sexism, I was sort of amused or enraged, but never cowed. (qtd. in Hollrah 28)

None of the authoresses analyzed has been "cowed" by colonialist or patriarchal ideologies. On the contrary, they have remained faithful to their roots, they have kept their traditions alive. Traditions are kept alive in each (re)telling of a story that in turn keeps connections to tribal identity and guarantees survival. These contemporary storytellers endure with the traditional powers of a woman's heart: peacefulness and harmony. Thus, as the Cheyenne saying goes, "a people is not conquered until the hearts of the women are on the ground." Each authoress is both Thought Woman, who thinks an ancient new world into being and creates it with the power of words, and Grandmother Spider who, with threads of words, weaves stories that create the world anew each time, with each story, in each storytelling. As Ayah does in remembering and thus "telling" her (hi)story, these Native American writers tell their (hi)stories and make of that telling a political act; they acquire agency; they all become *resistance women*.

IV.D. Memory

In the remembering of heritage there is strength, continuance, and renewal.
Geary Hobson[27]

Memory, that experience of the mind which is legendary as well as historical, personal as well as cultural.
Scott Momaday [28]

As part of the social discourse, literature is a "place where memory is preserved" (Angenot, 1994) thus, these literary pieces can be analyzed as representations of the cultural memory of each authoress' respective community. Each of these pieces both preserves the memory of the group, and transmits that memory which becomes an object of (re)discovery and knowledge. As already stated, the concept of memory is understood as a representation of a past that needs to be reassembled with fidelity, a fidelity that is achieved in the responsible act of remembering because the fragility of memory demands responsibility (Ricœur, 1999). This conceptualization of memory links to a central characteristic among Native Americans: responsibility; responsibility with the self, the community, and the universe.

In the stories analyzed memory is a pervasive, driving force that shapes the characters' story and the stories' character. These contemporary stories constitute critical loci of enunciation whose essential matter is memory, a voiced counter-memory to the memory passed down and controlled by the hegemonic discourse. "The acts of memory are performative acts" (Fortunati 8, own translation) as storytelling is. Storytelling is ritualistic in the sense that through an involvement in the stories both storyteller and listener/reader get transformed. Stories bring myth to memory and keep cultures and thus identity from vanishing in the deep waters of forgetfulness. Hence, storytelling is a means of resistance to the hegemonic power that for centuries has tried to mute the so-called "silent minority." As Vezzetti asserts, "the value and duty of memory [is] to face silence and the falsification of events" (10, own translation).

---

[27] The Remembered Earth: An Anthology of Contemporary Native American Literature. 10.
[28] "The Man Made of Words" 644.

Control on discourse and thus on "truth" implies control on a People's cultural identity. The one who controls, survives.

In this vein, the view to the past in the act of re-membering is not an escape but a new rerun into the past to provoke changes in the present and thus in the future. As Navajo writer Luci Tapahonso states in an interview with Joseph Bruchac,

> the past determines what our present is or what our future will be. I don't think there is really a separation of the three. We have to have the past in order to go on and to survive, to draw strength from. . . . Storytelling is done in order to draw strength and in order to see ourselves—not as separate from other people in terms of experience and problems . . . but to see ourselves in a community and to see a unity with other people (qtd. in Trout IM-61 and 20)

A re-membrance of culture, (hi)stories, traditions is not a nostalgic posture but a challenging attitude that highlights continuity, which is essential to secure survival. "Without that memory," Allen states, "we are doomed to engulfment by a paradigm that is fundamentally inimical to the vitality, autonomy, and self-empowerment essential for satisfying, high-quality life" (Sacred 214).

Concomitantly, in an interview with Carroll, Pawnee writer Anna Lee Walters has said: "My future is in my past, the values and visions of a collective past" (72). This past remains alive in her story "The Warriors" as a result of Uncle Ralph's power to remember. The fact that Uncle Ralph retells the traditional Pawnee myths underscores both the imprint of the past for the Pawnees and the warrior nature manifested in the everyday fight for survival grounded on memory. When Uncle Ralph states that "It's more than just repeating words" (728), he means that recollections, to be meaningful, need to be believed as actual realizations of a past that is being recovered before it disappears and with it a whole culture. Even more, stories are told to be believed, "stories are true," Scott Momaday affirms, "They are true to our common experience, actual or imagined; they are statements that concern the human condition" ("The Native Voice" 10-11). Following a similar line of thought, Leslie Silko has stated that the ancient Pueblo people sought a *communal* truth, not an absolute one.

Memory and the oral tradition are two cornerstones for contemporary Native American writers. In fact both have a similar function since, as Sarup defines it,

> tradition, usually said to be received, in reality made, is an activity of selection, revision and invention. Its function is to defend identity against the threat of heterogeneity, discountinuity and contradiction. In this way, tradition becomes a usable past, and the evocation of deep, sacred origins becomes a means of creating a people (182).

The people in the stories analyzed (re)create themselves and their communities evoking memories that (re)connect them with roots and traditions as the storymakers do in selecting, revising, and (re)inventing the time immemorial stories.

Traditionally, Native Americans lacking literacy preserved literature, their lore, in memory; with literacy, memory is preserved in literature. Thus literature turns into a memory mediator (Fortunati, 2004; Assman, 2002) that in the act of storytelling can heal and transform traumatic experiences, can restore the essential balance and harmony of the universe for those who remember and for those literature remembers.

Faithful to tradition, through Ayah in "Lullaby," Silko pays homage to the oral tradition in spite of paradoxically recording Ayah's story in the written mode. Though Ayah is illiterate, she possess the richest of "knowledges," the knowledge of tradition, the knowledge of her ancestors, the knowledge that rescues her from vanishing, the knowledge that saves her and with her, the entire community. She is the living evidence that memory resides in people's minds and imagination, not *only* in written records. Hence, dismantling the false equation: literary knowledge = civilization = salvation. Ayah survives thanks to her memories anchored in roots and tradition, which balance her losses.

Re-membering fuels traditions which are ignited with storytelling. *Retellings* are more than just tired reruns, each retelling is a time immemorial story made anew, adapted to a new context and always stressing continuity and survival. Not remembering equals to be lost, disconnected, alienated from one's own life, that is, it implies being identityless, a stranger in one's own body

and spirit. As Uncle Ralph says: "Don't forget what I've told you all these years. It's the only chance not to become what everyone else is" (729); i.e. not to become oppressed. This conceptualization acknowledges the fact that, in Allen's words "the roots of oppression are to be found in the loss of tradition and memory because that loss is always accompanied by a loss of a positive sense of self. In short, Indians think it is important to remember" (Sacred 210). Thus, to re-member means to claim the past, a past that many a time is hard and hurts, as is the case with Ayah and her dramatic family losses. A faithful and responsible re-membering brings forth regeneration.

Walters, Erdrich, Allen, Silko are contemporary Native American storymakers and storytellers who do remember and thus, with and through storytelling, transmit the culture and thus preserve the memory and lore of the community. These authoresses, because they are women, are culture carriers and thus "memory alive."[30] They have "overcome the tradition of silence"[31] through their stories. Storytelling keeps memory alive. Thus, the importance of storytelling to reconnect with origins and traditions. In life as in literature, one and the same in the traditional Native American conception of the world, communitarian memory has its reservoir in the woman, the axis around which the culture of the Peoples revolves.

Rounding off, memory is a representation of a past to be (re)constructed faithfully and with personal and communal responsibility. Through stories based on memory, traditions are kept alive and thus, survival is achieved.

As Roberta Hill asserts, imagination and memory are "two powers of ancestral energy" (31) well used by these contemporary Native American writers in storymaking and storytelling to preserve and transmit a culture, and in so doing, (re)create the identity of a given group. That is, because the literary discourse is a place for memory, the literary discourse (re)creates a space of identity. Hence, through the (re)construction of cultural memory by means of the representations outlined in the literary discourse it is possible to define one's and the group's identity and, consequently, proudly differentiate from the Other

---

[30] From Joy Harjo's poem "Skeleton of Winter" in Trout 718.
[31] From Anzaldúa's Borderlands / La Frontera, 59

(Paruzzo, 2007).[32] This suggests that there exists an indissoluble union between memory and identity.

IV.E. Identity

Stories tell the people who tell the stories who they are.
Louis Owens[33]

The issue of identity is a vital theme in Native American literature since a clear sense of identity allows a person and a group "placement, association, differentiation and understanding [in] society" (Celi and Harrington 31, own translation). Native Americans have a need to (re)construct their identities disseminated with colonization, "an identity hidden with the veil of power" (Celi and Harrington 12, own translation). In fact identity is the theme that permeates the categories already analyzed. The clash of cultures that resulted from European and Native American contact most damagingly affected the Native American culture—language, lifestyle, beliefs, customs, tradition. Consciously or not, the target was identity since, as Owens affirms, "a coherent personal identity [is] entirely dependent upon a coherent cultural identity" (20). Thus, nowadays Native Americans are struggling to recover their destroyed identity in a new context, a no longer exclusively Native American context. Kiowa writer and scholar N. Scott Momaday states in his essay "Confronting Columbus Again" that the challenge Native Americans face today is "how to remain Indian, how to assimilate without ceasing to be an Indian" which is possible because "still there are Indians, and the traditional world is still intact" (438), it just needs to be recovered in meaningful ways.

---

[32] These conceptualizations come from an unpublished paper entitled "El discurso literario: lugar de la memoria y espacio de identidad" read at the Jornadas de Investigación de la Facultad de Ciencias Humanas, UNRC. May, 2007.
[33] Other Destinies, 178

Notwithstanding colonization, Native Americans have survived and maintained their diversity; as Spicer observes, Native Americans "comprise at least 170 peoples with different cultural backgrounds, different historical experiences, and, as a result, different senses of identity" (9). In spite of the differences, in no case the Native American acquires significance of his/her identity in isolation; on the contrary, identity is communally achieved; identity is relational due to the intrinsic relationship existent with the universe; a relationship that stresses the continuity typical among Native Americans, which aims at achieving "a solid sense of identity" (Allen, Sacred 210) constantly shaken by the hegemonic power. Native American critic Louis Owens addresses the issue of Native American identity in the following terms:

> For Native Americans, the problem of identity comprehends centuries of colonial and postcolonial displacement, often brutally enforced peripherality, cultural denigration—including especially a harsh privileging of English over tribal languages—and systematic oppression by the monocentric "westering" impulse in America. (4)

Native Americans have a need to (re)construct their identities since the representation people—Native and non-Native—have is, more often than not, an invention, a stereotype that has moved between extremes since contact, which suggests no clear, "true" conception of "Indianness." Native Americans have been variously represented as the bloodthirsty Indian, the noble savage, the Whisky Indian, the Vanishing American, none representing the "real Indian." These are geocultural identities imposed by the colonizer (Mignolo, 2000; Quijano, 2000). All these images are a *product* of colonization. Laguna Pueblo/Sioux scholar and writer Paula Allen extensively refers to this point in The Sacred Hoop; of especial interest is the following paragraph:

> Colonization . . . more fundamentally . . . affects a people's understanding of their universe, their place within that universe, the kinds of values they must embrace and actions they must take to remain safe and whole within that universe. . . . colonization alters both the individual's and the group's sense of identity. *Loss of identity is a major dimension of alienation, and when severe enough it can lead to individual and group death.* (90, emphasis added)

Thus, the intense struggle of Native American intellectuals to recover their respective pre-contact identity.

In an interview with Joseph Bruchac, contemporary Chippewa writer Louise Erdrich observes that most Native American works almost inevitably deal with the search for origins, for a meaningful background. She comments that "One of the characteristics of being a mixed-blood is searching. You look back and say, 'Who am I from?' You must question. You must make certain choices. You're able to. And it's a blessing and it's a curse" (Trout 504). The stories analysed take place outside the reservation; however, people are, in one way or another, connected with their tribal community, a connection that allows the (re)construction of identity. Except in "Fleur," whose protagonist is in a sense iconic for female power, the other stories depict characters who are bicultural and thus, explicitly or implicitly, in Allen's words, "must deal with the effects of colonization and an attendant sense of loss of self. [In spite of this,] each is also a participant in a ritual tradition that gives their individual lives shape and significance" (Sacred 79).

Characters travel or walk around, consciously or unconsciously, in search of something lost. Uncle Ralph comes and goes searching for warriors that be faithful to tradition, that fight for beauty, i.e. harmony; Fleur moves to Argus and then back to the reservation in search for a life of her own; Charley looks for meaning in his life, his is a quest for authenticity; Ayah, actually in search for her husband, through reminiscences looks for hozho, tradition, her walk symbolically resembles the Navajo Long Walk;[34] Yellow Woman walks up and down the mountain, along the river, to the village in search of a reconnection with tradition, cultural values. And they all go back home, back to the fountain life. Uncle Ralph goes where all warriors go; "wherever the warriors are, I'll find them," he says (729). Fleur goes back to the reservation and family lands. Charley goes back to his mothers' and symbolically to his

---

[34] The tragic and painful walk (300 miles) the Navajos had to undergo in 1864 when they were forced to migrate from their homeland, Dinetah to Fort Summer in New Mexico under the Removal Act.

mother's womb. Ayah goes back to her place in nature, her familiar landscape, the lava boulders. Yellow Woman goes back to the village and her family.

Something similar happens in "real" life to Native American writers who, with their writing, keep on moving, keep on going home as "a way to recover and restore parts of their Indian heritage" (Erdrich in Trout 504) after years of cultural displacement. Stories, words in memory, provide "the necessary material to forge an identity" (Owens 122). That is the material that the writers use to relate their and their community's experience. "Postcolonial writers, from the margin, acquire a creative power that allows their voice to be heard, to narrate their own experience, throwing a bridge between center and periphery, which in turn allows them to unveil their identity" (Foresto, Paruzzo, and Engert 123). Thus, acknowledgement of roots proves to be crucial for identity (re)construction and definition. Through the telling of stories in which the traditional and the contemporary world converge, contemporary Native American writers not only preserve and transmit the memory of their respective communities, but also rescue and (re)construct communal and personal identity.

Identity is neither built in isolation nor static but as LaVonne Brown Ruoff asserts, "The identity of the individual grows out of the totality of experiences transmitted from one generation to another" (Studies 167-168). Hence the relevance of stories to transmit such experience and lore. It is not surprising then that the oral traditions were the target of colonization—through all sorts of translators, interpreters, chroniclers—to weaken the Native American sense of identity. Namely through changes of focus, axis, belief (mis)interpretations, a loss of identity was subtly induced. Thus, the Native American turned into an identityless drifter. In a nutshell, destroy the oral tradition and a People's identity is destroyed too.

How to revert the situation? Because tradition is the wellspring of identity, Native American writers, in recovering roots, have started the (re)construction of Native American identity. This has been especially well achieved by Native American female writers who have undertaken the traditional role of the woman as conveyor of tradition. As Allen states,

"Apparent throughout most of the literature . . . is the presence of the Indian woman as a storyteller and bearer of meaning and tradition" (Studies 136).

These contemporary storytellers remind their people of who they are through their stories. In turn, this attitude is suggestive of the mothering role so essential among Native Americans. As Owen clearly explains, "clan identity and a secure knowledge of one's identity within the community is conveyed most firmly through the mother" (179). The woman is the link among generations. Navajo writer Lucy Tapahonso beautifully expresses this connection in her essay "What I Am:" "what I am is my mother, her mother, and my great-grandmother" (71).

Identity is kept alive through a faithful connection to memories embedded in stories; those stories that blur the line between ordinary and mythic reality. As "mythically the word created the earth" (Hogan, Studies 172), stories, through words, (re)construct the cultural identity of contemporary Native Americans restoring the essential harmony among all things created.

"Now before I go, ... do *you* know who *you* are?" [35]

---

[35] Anna Lee Walters's "The Warriors" (729, emphasis added)

CHAPTER V: CONCLUDING REMARKS

In the gap between our own culturally conditioned view of the world and that of another with radically different orientation . . . we may catch a glimpse of the way the world really is.

Walter Goldschmidt[36]

Nothing is conclusive in the Native American world, thus neither could it be in Native American literature. Everything is continuous. Continuity is the Native American mode of experience. Hence, I would like to withdraw from this presentation by opening a story.

> *If an arrow is well made, it will have tooth marks upon it. That is how you know. The Kiowas made fine arrows and straightened them in their teeth. Then they drew them to the bow to see that they were straight. Once there was a man and his wife. They were alone at night in their tipi. By the light of a fire the man was making arrows. After a while he caught sight of something. There was a small opening in the tipi where the two hides had been sewn together. Someone was there on the outside, looking in. The man went on with his work, but he said to his wife, "Someone is standing outside. Do not be afraid. Let us talk easily, as of ordinary things." He took up an arrow and straightened it with his teeth; then, as it was right for him to do, he drew it to the bow and took aim, first in this direction and then in that. And all the while he was talking, as if to his wife. But this is how he spoke: "I know that you are there on the outside, for I can feel your eyes upon me. If you are a Kiowa, you will understand what I am saying, and you will speak your name." But there was no answer, and the man went on in the same way, pointing the arrow around. At last his aim fell upon the place where his enemy stood, and he let go of the string. The arrow went straight to the enemy's heart.*

This is "The Story of the Arrowmaker,"[37] a story about language and the way in which language involves risk and responsibility for the participants in the storytelling experience. Anna Lee Walters (Otto-Pawnee), Louise Erdrich

---

[36] qtd. in Turner 17
[37] Retold by Scot Momaday in his essay "The Man Made of Words" (645)

(Chippewa), Paula Allen (Laguna Pueblo/Sioux), and Leslie Silko (Laguna Pueblo) are the contemporary Native American woman writers who have undertaken the risk and the responsibility of using language meaningfully through their short stories in a postcolonial context in which Native American woman writers are one of the previously (?) marginalized intellectuals within the academy due to both their gender and ethnicity.

These writers are female descendants of indigenous peoples in the United States of America, that is, half-breeds or mixed bloods who make of that fact a strength to advance their agendas. These writers, among other Native American female activists, "lay claim to the ancient power that is vested in Women since before time" (Allen, Sacred 201). They are women involved in the struggle for survival with their hybrid, crossbred tools that cross-pollinate the literary field. From their mediational position, these authoresses recover the Native American lore and put emphasis on "Native concerns such as nurturing survival, continuance, and continual reemergence of cultural identity" (Ruppert 4). Theirs is a sample of the rich and ongoing creations in the so-called "emergent literature" or "minority literature." Anna Lee Walters's "The Warriors, Louise Erdrich's "Fleur," Paula Allen's "Tough Love," and Leslie Silko's "Lullaby" and "Yellow Woman," the stories analyzed and discussed in the present work, among other literary pieces, contribute to the "centripetal counterforce necessary to sustain an ethnic group, even organize it into a social movement" (Cochran 89).

Contemporary Native American stories are concerned with liminality, a complex state to dwell but one that offers Native Americans salvation as it helps reconnect present with past and future in an ever present, never ending cycle, as ever present and never ending as life is for Native Americans. This is an uncomfortable necessary state for those who endure. The pieces are in a liminal position, as their authoresses are, because they are the result of border thinking whose essential quality is to think from dichotomous concepts because of being a dichotomous locus of enunciation. In words of Mignolo, "the key configuration of border thinking [is] *thinking from dichotomous concepts rather than ordering the world in dichotomies*" (85). In this way, the colonial difference

is exposed. More than a counter memory to the Western colonialist and patriarchal ideologies, contemporary Native American literary discourse counterbalances the hegemonic discourse. The short stories turn into critical loci of enunciation that counteract the devastating effects of centuries of unidirectional (hegemonic) views. Such counterbalance and counteraction are achieved by means of stories that expose, celebrate and, in so doing, protect the culture of the many peoples that have inhabited the rich, fruitful millennial lands of the "new" continent.

There is a strong need to demonstrate that, as Josephy claims, "there is neither a single Indian people nor a single Indian Language, but many different peoples, with different racial characteristics, different cultures, and different languages" (9)[38] and that the Native American *exists* as a real unique human being, and thus overthrow the idea that "To be an Indian in modern American society is in a very real sense to be unreal and ahistorical" (8) as Vine Deloria, Jr. attests. The Native American has been fictionally textualized not as a human being, but as an artifact, a stereotype, a "dead entity." However, contrary to generalized opinion, the Native American did not disappear.

One of the prevailing themes in contemporary Native American literature is the "need for continuity with a pre-colonial past and self-definition of the political future" (Tyson 374). As Celi and Harrington state, "Postcolonial feminist literature turns into a channel of resistance through memory and the recovery of traditions and beliefs" (47, own translation). Culture and memory have traditionally been preserved and transmitted by women through storytelling in the Native American world. This is consistent with the female principle of continuity and the female capacity to (re)create and (re)generate in the heart and the mind. As aforementioned, the Native American context is essentially feminine, it is centered and focused on the woman; to ignore this context, explicitly or implicitly, means to ignore or hide the centrality of women in tribal society, literature, hearts, and minds. Though the detrimental effects of colonialism on the colonized are portrayed in the stories analyzed, what is

---

[38] It is worth reminding here that though I acknowledge the diversity among Native American peoples, for the purposes of discussing the categories under analysis—power, memory, and identity—I follow critic Paula Allen in making a generalization of tribal beliefs.

stressed is the power women exert in recovering traditions, keeping and transmitting memory and (re)constructing a personal and communal identity.

Through the analysis and discussion of the selected stories, I have corroborated that the literary discourse is a critical loci of enunciation enacted by contemporary Native American female writers who, from their (intellectual) border position, recreate (hi)stories that erect as a bastion of resistance through the remembrance, commemoration, and celebration of the People's culture. This, in turn, allows the (re)definition of each group's communal identity. As seen in the analysis and discussion, the issue of identity crosses over the debate on the relation between discourse and memory. As already stated, this is possible since by means of the (re)construction of the cultural memory of a given group through the representations outlined in the group's literary discourse, it seems feasible to define one's own identity and in so doing differentiate oneself from the "Other," whoever this other be.

Storytelling is a means to understand life, storytelling is an identity-conferring source that grants significance to the world around. Velie asserts, "Native American Indian identities are created in stories . . . memories, visions, and shadows of heard stories are the paramount verities of a tribal presence" (119). Because traditional stories are ritual in nature, a return to ancestral oral traditions is both a meaningful way to faithfully (re)collect the roots of cultural identity and a meaningful future path to a (re)construction of a seemingly destroyed identity, both personal and communal, as cannot otherwise be among Native Americans, especially when done by women, the eternal creatrixes.

The short stories turn into modern kivas[39] where a new kind of ceremony is taking place; a new ceremony of healing, restitution, and resistance whose medium is the written word in the hands (and minds) of powerful women who create a web of words full of new meanings as Grandmother Spider wove stories in time immemorial. These Yellow Women—Anna Lee Walters, Louise Erdrich, Paula Gunn Allen, Leslie Marmon Silko, Sister, Fleur, Margaret, Ayah,

[39] The Kiva is the spiritual centre of the Pueblos.

Yellow Woman—with and in storytelling resist. In "fact and fiction" they are *resistance women*.

What does all this tell us of our culture, our (hi)stories, our memories, our society as individuals and as community? Contact with other cultures, other literatures, should give renewed meaning to one's own. I do believe contact with different literatures allows a better understanding not only of the culture and the values transmitted by those literatures about a given community, but also of one's own; it offers the possibility of knowing different realities, of appreciating the wealth inherent in diversity. And finally, because "minorities" have their own voice that pronounces, states, and communicates "realities," and because they want that voice be listened to, from the Academia we have the obligation and the responsibility to give room to all the voices. This is based on the conviction that the more varied the voices we allow to listen, the sharper the ears will become to identify diverse discourses and also, perhaps, to interpret different possible meanings. As Highwater states, "We must learn to use our minds to discover meaning rather than truth, and we must come to recognize that a variety of meanings and interpretations is what ultimately makes life truthful" (206). Though the unison can be pleasant to the ear, the orchestral symphonic plurality offers a richness that can, concomitantly, elevate the spirit.

I would like to think of the whole of the U.S.A. not a melting pot, a salad bowl, or even a cultural mosaic but a colorful tapestry in which each woven thread be essential for the creation and existence of a truly genuine and original pattern. Cut one thread and the whole is destroyed. But weaving is part of tradition, a tradition well learned especially by Native American women thus, the threads are made to remain together in spite of adversity as if cognizant of the plea among Native Americans along the Long Walk, "We will be strong as long as we are together."[40] This is the way I have spoken up my thoughts bearing in mind that using language implies risk and responsibility, a risk and a responsibility I have been sharing with you.

We are all related.

BIBLIOTECA

[40] Lucy Tapahonso's poem "In 1864" line 76.

Works Cited

Allen, Paula Gunn, ed. Studies in American Indian Literature: Critical Essays and Course Designs. New York: Modern Language Association, 1983.

---. The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions. Boston: Beacon Press, 1992.

---. "Tough Love." Ortiz 196-215.

Angenot, Marc. Interdiscursividades. De hegemonias y disidencias. Córdoba: Editorial Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, 1994

Anzaldúa, Gloria. Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza. San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1997.

Ashcroft, Bill; Gareth Griffiths; and Helen Tiffin. The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures. London and New York: Routledge, 1989.

Barricelli, Jean-Pierre and Joseph Gibaldi Ed. Interrelations of Literature. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1982.

Brown Ruoff, LaVonne. "Old Traditions and New Forms." Studies in American Indian Literature. Ed. Paula Gunn Allen. New York: Modern Language Association, 1983. 147-168.

Celi, Ana and Claudia Harrington. "Entre la ficción y la realidad: la construcción de la identidad en la narrativa femenina poscolonial a través de *Tan lejos de Dios* de Ana Castillo." in Ana Celi - Claudia Harrington. Compiladoras. Identidad de Mujer en la obra *Tan Lejos de Dios* de Ana Castillo. Río Cuarto: Universidad Nacional de Río Cuarto, 2006. 31-50.

Celi, Ana and Claudia Harrington. Introduction. Ana Celi - Claudia Harrington. Compiladoras. Identidad de Mujer en la obra *Tan Lejos de Dios* de Ana Castillo. Río Cuarto: Universidad Nacional de Río Cuarto, 2006. 9-13.

Cochran, Stuart. "The Ethnic Implications of Stories, Spirits, and the Land in Native American Pueblo and Aztlán Writing." MELUS. 20.2 (Summer 1995): 69-91.

Cohen, Robin. "Landscape, Story, and Time as Elements of Reality in Silko's 'Yellow Woman'." Weber: The Contemporary West. 12.3. (Fall 1995)

Cowart, David. Studies in American Indian Literatures. Ser. 2, 8.1 (Spring 1996): 1-12.

Deloria, Vine Jr. "Indians Today, The Real and Unreal." Trout 7-14.

Elliot, Emory, General Editor. Columbia Literary History of the United States. New York: Columbia University Press, 1988.

Erdrich, Louise. "Fleur." The Norton Anthology of American Literature. Ed. Nina Bayn. Vol. E. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2003. 2562-2571.

Fajardo-Acosta, Fidel. World Literature Website. (2005). Internet. 2007. Available http://fajardo-acosta.com/worldlit/

Forbes, Jack. "Basic Concepts for Understanding Native History and Culture." Lobo and Talbot 28-40.

Foresto, Angélica, Daniela Paruzzo and Valeria Engert. "Construcción de la Identidad de Personajes Femeninos en *Tan Lejos de Dios,* de Ana Castillo, desde la Perspectiva de Grupos de Pertenencia y Grupos de Referencia" in Ana Celi - Claudia Harrington. Compiladoras. Identidad de Mujer en la obra *Tan Lejos de Dios* de Ana Castillo. Río Cuarto: Universidad Nacional de Río Cuarto, 2006. 107-125.

Fortunati, Vita. "La memoria cultural. Nuevas perspectivas para los estudios culturales." Diss. Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, 2005.

Gilbert, Sandra and Susan Gubar. The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1985.

Gill, Sam D. and Irene F. Sullivan. Dictionary of Native American Mythology. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Halder Bornali. "Native American Women." LakotaArchives (2002): 7 pp. Internet. 2007. Available http://www.lakotaarchives.com.

Highwater, Jamake. The Primal Mind: Vision and Reality in Indian American. New York: Meridian, 1982.

Hill, Roberta J. "A Heart Complete: Earth Knowledge, Native American Literature and Social Justice" in Raìzes e Rumos: Perspectivas Interdisciplinares em Estudos Americanos. Torres, Sonia Org. Rio de Janeiro: Viveiros de Castro Editora Ltda. 2001.

Hobson, Geary. The Remembered Earth: An Anthology of Contemporary Native American Literature. Albuquerque, NM: Red Earth Press, 1979.

Hogan, Linda. "Who Puts Together." Studies in American Indian Literature. Ed. Paula Gunn Allen. New York: Modern Language Association, 1983. 169-177

Hollrah, Patrice. "The Men in the Bar Feared Her": The Power of Ayah in Leslie Marmon Silko's "Lullaby." Studies in American Indian Literatures. Ser. 2, 15.2 (Summer 2003): 1-38.

Hutcheon, Linda. A Poetics of Postmodernism. New York: Routledge, 1988.

Josephy, Alvin M. Jr. The Indian Heritage of America. New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1981.

Krupat, Arnold. The Voice in the Margin: Native American Literature and the Canon. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981.

Lauter, Paul, general editor. The Heath Anthology of American Literature. 2 vols. Second edition. Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath Company, 1994.

Lobo, Susan and S. Talbot, eds. Native American Voices. New York: Addison and Wesley Longman Educational Publishers, 1988.

Mignolo, Walter. Local Histories / Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, *and Border Thinking*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000.

Momaday, Scott. "Confronting Columbus Again." Ed. Nabokov, Peter Native American Testimony. New York: Penguin Books, 1991. 436-439.

---. House Made of Dawn. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers. 1968.

---. "The Man Made of Words." Trout 635-647.

---. "The Native Voice." Elliot 5-15.

Nelson, Robert "Place, Vision, and Identity in Native American Literatures." The Internet Public Library. (1997): n. pag. Internet. 2006. Available http://www.richmond.edu/~rnelson/pvi.html

Nochlin, Linda. Women, Art, and Power and Other Essays. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1988.

Ortiz, Simon, ed. Earth Power Coming. Arizona: Navajo Community College Press, 1983.

Owens, Louis. Other Destinies: Understanding the American Indian Novel. Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992.

Paruzzo, Daniela P. "Minorías: un tema étnico y universal," in *Las Relaciones Interculturales entre Estados Unidos y Latinoamérica*. II Jornadas Regionales de Estudios Americanos. Río Cuarto: UNRC, 1999. 122-130.

---. "El discurso literario: lugar de la memoria y espacio de identidad." Diss. Universidad Nacional de Río Cuarto, 2007.

Paruzzo, Daniela P. and Valeria Engert. "Diferencia Colonial: Lugar de Encuentro" Diss. Universidad Nacional de Cuyo, 2007.

Peyer, Brend, ed. The Singing Spirit. Early Short Stories by North American Indians. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1989.

Quijano, Aníbal. "Colonialidad del poder, eurocentrismo y América Latina". Ed. Lander, Edgardo Colonialidad del Saber y Eurocentrismo. Buenos Aires: UNESCO-CLACSO, 2000: 201-242.

Ricœur, Paul. La Lectura del Tiempo Pasado: Memoria y Olvido. Trans. Gabriel Aranzueque. Madrid: Arrecife Producciones, S. L., 1999.

Rosen, Kenneth, ed. The Man to Send Rain Clouds: Contemporary Stories by American Indians. New York: Vintage Books, 1975.

Ruppert, James. Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction. Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press,1995.

Sarup, Madan. Identity, Culture and the Postmodern World. Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1996.

Selden y Widdowson. A reader´s guide for Contemporary Literary Theory, 3rd edition. Great Britain: The University Press of Kentucky, 1993.

Seyersted, Per. "Two Interviews with Leslie Marmon Silko." American Studies in Scandinavia 13 (1981): 17-33.

Showalter, Elaine. Introduction. Modern American Women Writers. Eds. Elaine Showalters; Lea Baechler; and A. Walton Litz. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, Collier Books, 1993. ix-xv.

Silko, Leslie. "Lullaby." Trout 390-396.

---. "Yellow Woman." The Man to Send Rain Clouds. Contemporary Stories by American Indians. Ed. Rosen, Kenneth. New York: Vintage Books, 1975. 33-45

Spicer, Edward. "The American Indians." Lobo and Talbot 9-16.

Steinberg, Marc. "Myth, folk tale and ritual in Anna Lee Walters's 'The Warriors'." Studies in Short Fiction. 34 (Winter 1997): n. pag. Internet. 2006. FindArticles.com

Tapahonso, Luci. "What I Am." Trout 68-71.

Trout, Lawana, ed. Native American Literature, An Anthology. Lincolnwood: NTC Contemporary Publishing Group, 1999.

Turner, Frederick, ed. The Portable North American Indian Reader. New York:: Penguin Books, 1977.

Tyson, Lois. Literary Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide. London and New York: Garland Publishing, 1999.

Velie, Alan, ed. Native American Perspectives on Literature and History. Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995.

Vezzetti, Hugo. "La memoria como práctica social y forma de resistencia." HUMBOLDT. 44.137 (2002): 10-12

Vizenor, Gerald, ed. Narrative Chance: Postmodern Discourse on Native American Indian Literatures. Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993.

Walters, Ann Lee. "The Warriors." Trout 720-730.

71195