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Master Paper

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The image of an Indian in Sherman Alexie's collection of short stories
"Ten little Indians" and Leslie Marmon Silko's novel "Ceremony"

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I Introduction

The aims of the paper are to analyze the characteristic features of Indians' identity: the memory of rituals in Indians' mentality, the position of a woman in Indian life and the Indian concept of land and nature in Sherman Alexie's collection of short stories "Ten little Indians" and Leslie Marmon Silko novel "Ceremony".

To achieve the aims the method of textual analysis is used.

The objectives of the paper are to explore the literature of criticism of native American writers (by James Rupert, "World Literature Criticism Supplement", Jim Rupert "The Journal of Ethnic Studies", Andrew Wiget "World Literature Today", Peter G. Beidler, American Indian Culture and Research Journal) , literature of rituals, the woman's position in the society , the spiritual approach towards land and nature, to analyze the importance of rituals, a woman's position, the concept of sacredness of land in Sherman Alexie's collection of short stories "Ten little Indians" and Leslie Marmon Silko's novel "Ceremony".

In the introduction two types of Indians and the identity of Indians are described.

In the development characteristic features of Indians, the importance of rituals, matrilineal position in life and the importance of nature in understanding of Indian's life, are analyzed.

Two writers, that will be analyzed in this paper, emphasized two types of Indians: a positive and a negative type. The positive type is an Indian who keeps to the traditions of Indians , has spiritual view about the world, who hasn't distracted from his roots. The negative type is a drunker, war veteran who lost his humanity because of war atrocities, prostitutes. I will concentrate on the identical features of Indians in literature.

In the paper there will be the focus on analysis of Indian identity in Modern Native American Literature, particularly of two writers: Sherman Alexie and Leslie Marmon Silko. Firstly, Native American literature is the literature of people of Native American descent. The dominant focus of Native American literature is on issues related to Native American culture, history, religion,

and experiences. Native American literature refers to works written by the indigenous people and it encompasses many different social, cultural, historical, and spiritual perspectives.

Native American identity is a sense of “humanity” which links Indianness to sacred traditions, places, and shared history as indigenous people. Language is also seen as an important part of identity, and learning Native languages, especially for youth in a community, is an important part in tribal survival. Henry Real Bird offers his own definition, “An Indian is one who offers tobacco to the ground, feeds the water, and prays to the four wings in his own language.” Pulitzer Prize winning Kiowa author N.Scott Momaday gives a definition that is less supernatural but still based in the traditions and experience of a person and their family,” An Indian is someone who thinks of themselves as an Indian. You have to have a certain experience of the world in order to formulate this idea. I consider myself an Indian; I have had the experience of an Indian. I know how my father saw the world, and his father before him.” (N.Scott Momaday). Cultural identity is a way how Indians remember their past, tell their stories, and interpret their myths. Thus cultural identity is made within the discourses of history and culture.

The Native American identity consists of such elements: the significance of rituals in Indians world, the importance of women in Indian society, the sacred understanding of land, genes or biology and self- identification.

Firstly, the approach to rituals is based on the environmental wisdom, rituals and spirituality of Indians. In literature (written by Native Americans) animals were described as equal in rights to humans. They were hunted only for food, and the hunter first asked permission of the animal’s spirit. Among the hunter-gatherers the land was owned in common: there was no concept of private property of land, as the idea that it could be bought and sold was repugnant. In literature there were some rituals emphasized. One of them was pow-wow. At pow-wows, such as the annual Gathering of Nations in Albuquerque, New Mexico, members of drum group sit in a circle around a large drum. Familiar pow-wow songs include honour songs, include honour songs, intertribal songs, crow-hops, sneak-up songs, grass-dances, two-steps, welcome songs, going-home songs, and war songs.

The second element of Indian identity is the power of women in Indian’s society. In literature (written by Native American writers Simon j. Ortiz, Joy Harjo, Greg Sarris) Indian women are portrayed as very strong personalities, warriors, leaders of the family, spiritual leaders in a tribe,

wise advisors, carers of children and husbands, teachers of old traditions. It was particularly women who kept the ancient traditions and rituals. They should be thanked for saving the language, spiritual approach towards nature, land. They teach children the rules of appropriate behaviour, they train Indians the sense of community. In effect, women have been, and remain, the keepers of their culture, preserving traditions and handing them down to their children. "It was our grandmothers who held on to what they could of our identity as a People." (Canadian women's journal in the late 1980s.) In literature (Written by Linda Hogan, N.Scott Momaday) women are also described as medicine women. Usually, a girl begins to learn medicine from her grandmother at an early age. Women may hold medicine bundles, or jish, for healing. They may be herbalists, knowing which plants to use and prescribe; helpers or apprentices; diagnosticians, responsible for determining what is wrong with a patient and what ceremony and procedure will help in curing him or her. They have become central figures of leadership in their increasingly independent native society.

The third feature of Indian identity is the sacred approach of land and nature. Awareness of interrelatedness of man and nature permeates Native American literature. "The treatment of nonhuman animals as distinct people suggests that equality was not simply a human attribute but a recognition of the creaturehood of all creation" (Vine Deloria, Jr.). In Native American mythic narrative there is a strong sense of the sense, of animals. In literature (written by L.M.Silko "Ceremony") the respect to living creatures is so immense that an Indian can not kill a deer even if his family is hungry. "It is inappropriate that I should take life just now when I am expecting the gift of life". (Momaday).

After the colonization (through centuries from the 16th to the 20th century) many Indian traditions, rituals and beliefs changed little by little. The main reasons were the loss of land by the conquest of white people and an actively hostile dominant culture that constantly worked to undermine tribal traditions and native people's cultural identities.

"The seizure of native lands- which was justified by white claims of cultural superiority and divine responsibility to wilderness- has come to be interpreted by whites and certain Indians as a sign of the superiority of the Euro-American model of private property and progress over the Indian model of nonexploitative partnership with nature." (Rachel Stein) As white [people] conquered more and more land, it signified white superiority. Indians' hardships of reservation life that are related with the loss of prime farming and hunting grounds- such as economic impoverishment, lack of higher education and professional methods, also, emotional hardships,

such as drunkenness and depression. This is a sign of Indian racial inferiority and inability to survive the rules of the white world.

Indians painfully realize that they cannot protect the natural entities whom they regard as spiritual from abuses at the hands of whites. When former tribal lands that have been seized by the government are sold to ranchers and loggers, the land is stripped for profit and the animals are killed for sport. The Indians understood that the land had been taken, because they couldn't stop these white people from coming to destroy the animals and the land. The inability of tribes to prevent this disaster leads to terrible sorrow and guilt.

Also, the white people performed the genocide of Indians. They slaughtered them, forbade their languages, traditions, rituals. In some cases the white people forced the Indians to work in mines as slaves where they died in great numbers. They tried to extinguish the roots, the basics of Indians life and everything what was dear to them. Indian children in white people's schools were taught to despise their ancestors, the language, culture. After they had finished the secondary school, they returned home and some Indians became strangers to their parents. Their approach towards Indian traditions was changed. The new generation moved to cities, married white spouses and became half-breed. It was the whites politics to conquer the Indian nation in all possible ways. Besides, the white people brought alcohol to the Indian world that was a total disaster to their mentality leading to degradation.

Yet the twentieth century brought significant changes to the conceptions of Natives by Europeans. "The Civil Rights Movement inspired America's indigenous peoples, and by the late 1960s they had begun reasserting their sovereignty rights and producing a significant body of literature." (Norma Wilson). It is generally thought that a Native American literary renaissance began in the late 1960s, with the publication of N.Scott Momaday's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *House Made of Dawn* (1968), an account of a tortured war veteran, Abel, who is caught between the reservation and urban worlds.

So, nowadays Indian traditions are not lost but only modified because many Indians in Native American literature try to regain it. The characters (in L.M.Silko "Ceremony" corrupted war veterans Harley, Pinkie) are lost between two opposing cultures: Native American and the whites society. These characters realize that 'there is no way to be an Indian (with all the pain that implies) and acceptable to whites at the same time. Although mixed descent Indians and Native Indians struggle with alienation, they also find ways to negotiate between the warring native and

white cultures, using their painfully gained knowledge of the white worlds in order to reformulate Indian stories and practices that can defeat the destructive practices of the dominant culture.

In this way , in literature there appeared many characters (L.M.Silko “Ceremony” a war veteran Tayo) who tried to regain their rights and traditions. As Silko shows that Indian civilization is living and has the potential to transform the whites culture. She says:” These things will only die if we neglect to tell the stories. So I am telling the stories.” With the help of Indian humor, even if we do not get her jokes she purifies us of our illusions about white culture and those about Indian culture as well. So with the power of memory, without anger and hatred, Indians can regain their roots and traditions.

However not all Indians are interested in regaining traditions. In literature (written by L.M. Silko “Almanac of the Dead” a young girl who is caught between her Indian heritage and the aristocratic Victorian society) some Indians accept Christianity, some emulate the white mainstream image of success, the veterans of the Second World War felt self –destructive envy of white peoples’ privileges. This dissatisfaction rise from the loss of ancestral lands. “They were never the same after that: they had seen what the white people had made from the stolen land... Every day they had to look at the land, from horizon to horizon, and every day the loss was with them; it was the dead unburied, and the mourning of the lost going on forever. So they tried to sink the loss in booze, and silence their grief with war stories about their courage, defending the land already lost.”. (L.Marmon Silko).

In early American culture books by white writers (Cooper) either romanticized red men or pictured them as bestial warriors and ravishers of women. Nowadays the portrayal of Indians changed. In recent years, creative Native American writers have finally emerged as eloquent voices for their people; Leslie Silko is one of the strongest and brightest. Nowadays Native American writers (Sherman Alexie, N.Scott Momaday, Greg Sarris) try to picturesque the real (sometimes negative, sometimes positive) portrait of Indian life.

Some of the earliest written works (1700s and 1800s) by Native Americans were religious sermons and protest works. Samson Occom (Mohegan) and William Apess (Pequot) protested discrimination against Native Americans. Occom’s Sermon Preached at the Execution of Moses Paul, an Indian (1772) discusses the damage that the introduction of alcohol had brought to native peoples. Many Native American writers of the 19th century wrote histories of their tribes.

One tribal historian was David Cusick (Tuscarora), whose sketches of Ancient History of the Six Nations (1827) was the first published tribal history. One of the best –known early tribal historians was George Copway (Ojibwa), whose Traditional History and Characteristic Sketches of the Ojibway Nation (1850) emphasizes the importance of tribal oral history and explains the migrations, myths, religions, government, language, hunting, and games of his nation. Among the prominent 19th- century Native American writers of fiction were John Rollin Ridge (Cherokee), who wrote at mid- century, and Emily Pauline Johnson (Mohawk), whose career lasted into the early 20th century.

Alexie, (1966) a Spokane and Coeur d'Alene Indian, is one of the most prominent Native – American writers of his generation. He is best known for his brave portrayal of the harsh realities of reservation life, and has become a modern voice in the continuing search for Native – American cultural identity. Alexie's works (*The Lone Range and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven* (1993), *Smoke Signals* (1998), *Indian Killer* (1996) detail, with dark humour, the debilitating influence of alcoholism and poverty that pervade life on the reservation as well as the anger that results from the distortion of true Indian culture. He is recognized as an innovative realist and erudite contributor to the modern Native- American tradition.

"I was much more fundamental then (in his earlier writing). What changed me was September 11th (2001): I am now desperately trying to let go of the idea of being right, the idea of making decisions based on imaginary tribes. The terrorists were flying planes into the buildings because they thought they were right and they had special knowledge, and we continue to react. And we will be going to war in Iraq soon because we think we have special knowledge- and we don't. We are making these decisions not based on any moral or ethical choice, but simply on the basis of power and money and ancient traditions that are full of shit, so I am increasingly suspicious of the word "tradition", whether in political or literary terms." (Sherman Alexie). Sherman Alexie learned from this experience that people can not change anything by force, at war . In the war people lose only moral and ethical values. So, in his writings he sometimes corrects Indian traditions and shows the real world of Indians. He criticizes stereotypes of Indians as nature – loving noble savages. Native American literature has nothing to do with the day – to – day lives of Indians. He wants his literature to concern the daily lives of Indians.

He is working on a memoir tracing his family history from his grandfather who died in the Second World War to his own children. Much of Alexie's fiction and poetry takes place on the Spokane Indian Reservation where he was born and raised, and he uses recurring characters like the isolated storyteller, Thomas Builds-the-Fire, and the violent and troubled bully, Victor. He focuses upon a small geographical locate to explore larger issues of history. At the same time he is more of an autobiographical writer. Alexie explains, "Every theme, every story, every tragedy that exists in literature takes place in my little community. Hamlet takes place on my reservation daily. King Lear takes place on my reservation daily. It's a powerful place. I'm never going to run out of stories."(Sherman Alexie).

Furthermore, Alexie explains that one of his primary goals is to reach Indian children on the reservation, whom he believes to be mainly influenced by White- dominated popular culture. Toward that end, Alexie often uses references popular culture. Alexie often uses references to television shows, movies, and music as a means to capture their attention and to speak in their language. "It's the cultural currency," he explains. "Superman means something different to me than it does to a white guy from Ames, Iowa, or New York City or L.A. It's a way for us to sit at the same table. I use pop culture like most poets use Latin." Specially, Alexie describes television as the contemporary Gutenberg press, maintaining that "TV is the only thing that keeps us vaguely in democracy even if it's in the hands of the corporate culture." (Sherman Alexie). Indian identity for him has two aspects: on the one hand, some Indianans in his stories (e.g. in a story "Do not go gentle" a couple of loving Indian parents who struggled for their baby's health, in a story "What ever happened to Frank Snake Church?" the protagonist Frank who quitted his beneficial job to start a new carrier as a basketball player only to commemorate the memory of his dead parents) keep to Indian traditions, rituals, they are spiritual, honest, have moral values, they respect and protect their community and family relations, but on the other hand, other Indians in his literature are drunkards , detached from traditions. They are violent and corrupt people. (e.g. in a story "What you pawn I will redeem" an Indian drunkard Jackson Jackson who wanted to buy his grandmother's regalia from the pawnbroker but spent all his in a bar).

Alexie's independent, even rebellious spirit is somewhat at odds with his use of ethnic categories. For the most part, he does not seek to tear down or question ethnic boundaries. For him, being Indian is the primary determinant of his identity and defines his writing: "If I write it, it's an Indian novel. If I wrote about the Amish, it would be an Indian novel. That's who I am." He criticizes the stereotypes of Indians as nature -loving noble savages and implicates what he calls "the corn-pollen, four directions, eagle- feathered school of native literature." You throw in a couple of birds and four directions and corn pollen," Alexie explains, "and it's Native American literature, when it has nothing to concern the daily lives of Indians." (Sherman Alexie). Indian identity for him has two aspects: on the one hand, some Indians in his stories keep to Indian traditions, rituals, they are spiritual, honest, keep to moral values, respect and protect their community and family relations, but on the other hand, other Indians in his literature are drunkers, detached from traditions.

Another of Alexie's purposes is to rewrite dominant American history, which barely acknowledges the violent colonization and subsequent massacres of Indians by European settlers, because, as Alexie suggests, to do so would severely damage American national identity

and pride. “If people start dealing with Indian culture and Indian peoples truthfully in this country, “ he argues, “we’re going to have to start dealing with the genocide that happened here. In order to start dealing truthfully with our cultures, they have to start dealing truthfully with that great sin, the original sin of this country, and that’s not going to happen.” (Sherman Alexie).

It is important to recognize that Indians are not only indigenous to North America and a colonized people, but they have been stereotyped and categorized by Europeans from their first settlements in the early seventeenth century. As Andrew Macdonald explains, “Since the first encounters of pre-colonial times, Europeans have shaped, changed, and distorted the indigenous people to serve white people’s needs. The very word ‘Indian’ is a conflation of hundreds of tribes, languages, and cultures into one emblematic figure: the Other, the Alien, the generalized Non- Europeans,” (Andrew Macdonald). While Natives were first codified as savages by European settlers, who claimed land in the name of Manifest Destiny, over time they tended to think of Natives more as noble savages. Alexie’s explains,

” Europeans lacked respect for their own civilization, when European whites have imagined a beatific union of “man and nature” they have assumed that the union would look not “human” but “natural”; therefore, they perceived the Indians as living in a “primitive” union of man and nature that was an antithesis of civilization.”(Sherman Alexie).

Alexie finds himself caught between mainstream American life and reservation life. As James Ruppert explains, “Native American writers write for two audiences – non- Native and Native American – or in many cases three audiences – a local, a pan – tribal one and a non- Native contemporary American one. The attempt to satisfy those audiences generates the peculiar construct of their art.” Alexie, a member of “Generation X” and younger than his precursors Momaday, Welch, and Silko, faces a greater challenge: how to write about Indians in a predominantly televisual country.

One way that Alexie disrupts colonial influences (the injustice made to Indians by white people, loss of land, great massacres of Indians through centuries) is by playing the role of a trickster, an important figure in many Native cultures. While the role of the trickster varies from tribe to tribe, he generally “has a familiar set of characteristics: he plays tricks and is the victim of tricks; he is amoral and has strong appetites, particularly for food and sex; he is footloose, irresponsible and callous, but somehow always sympathetic if not lovable.”

King believes that the conversion of Indians to Western religions has led to a deterioration of Native culture, community and beliefs, Alexie is more ambivalent about the influence of

Western religions upon Indians. While Alexie tends to criticize the deleterious influence of Catholicism and Christianity upon Native Americans, he considers the Jesuits more praiseworthy. "I love Jesuits," he explains. "They are the rock 'n' roll stars of Catholic church. I love their mysticism, their social and economic politics. I love their poetic streak and their rebelliousness." "I still am heavily Catholic-and Christian – influenced."

Alexie's esthetical attitudes are that Alexie regards the New Age movement with suspicion (after 1960's the white people gave Indians more rights to express themselves in literature) , viewing it as a misguided attempt on the part of white people to usurp Native culture largely for their own selfish purposes. Along similar lines, Alexie refuses to submit to mainstream standards for a watered – down, romanticized version of Native American literature. He is determined to remain fiercely independent, without catering to any specific audience, except in his desire to help his audience think about the issues he writes about, even if his positions on those issues are radical, disturbing, and confrontational."I've come to the realization," he maintains, "that many people have been reading literary fiction for the same reason they read mainstream fiction: for entertainment and a form of escape. I don't want to write books that provide people with that. I want books that challenge, anger, and possibly offend." (Sherman Alexie).

Leslie Marmon Silko, (1948), an accomplished Native American contemporary writer, was born in Albuquerque, New Mexico. She has a mix of Laguna Pueblo, Mexican, and White ancestry. Silko grew up at the Pueblo of Laguna, located in west central New Mexico. She attended a Catholic school in Albuquerque. In 1969 she received a bachelor's degree in English from the University of New Mexico. She later taught creative writing and a course in oral tradition for the English department at the University.

Silko reveals (in her interviews) that living in Laguna society as a mixed blood from a prominent family caused her a lot of pain. It meant being different from, and not fully accepted by either the full blooded Native Americans or white people. Silko, despite her pain, was able to overcome the lack of acceptance and identify with the Laguna culture. Despite her keen awareness of the equivocal position of mixed-bloods in Laguna society, she considers herself Laguna. As she puts it : "I am of mixed-breed ancestry, but what I know is Laguna"(Velie 106).

After the publication of her first novel, "Ceremony", in 1977, Leslie Marmon Silko's work began to substantial critical acclaim. The novel chronicles a young Native American's struggle to readapt to society following imprisonment by the Japanese in WWII. Tayo returns to his Laguna Pueblo reservation only to be haunted by their events he has witnessed and experienced as a soldier overseas. The struggle to find an identity and a will to survive lead him to the traditions of his Native American culture. The beliefs and practices of his Indian past are revealed to him as he searches for a ritual, or ceremony, that will bring back his desire to live. Critics hailed Silko as gifted in her ability to combine Native American legends and traditions in a novel about post – WWII America.

As a child Silko became familiar with the cultural folklore of the Laguna and Keres people through the stories passed down to her by her grandmother Lilly and her Aunt Susie. These women both had a tremendous effect on Silko, "passing down an entire culture by word of mouth" (Velie 106). In 1974 she published *Laguna Woman*, a book of poetry. In 1977 she wrote her novel "Ceremony". The novel received high praise from critics and its readers. She has been called the most accomplished Native American writer of her generation, as well as an "American Indian Literary Master"(Velie npg).

Although all of her work has received exemplary reviews, "Ceremony" seems to be the most talked about, and recognized for its literary achievement. There are a variety of positions taken by literary theorists and critics pertaining to the different themes in the book, and this can be an

illustration of the many ways to look at “Ceremony” and its characters. Alan R. Velie, says that “Ceremony” is not only an Indian narrative that "celebrates tradition," "Ceremony” also belongs to another tradition and form older than the novel--the grail romance"(Velie 107). Velie compares the novel to twentieth century novels that feature the legend of the Holy Grail in their fiction. He says that the similarity lies in the fact that there is a very serious connection between the health of the main character Tayo, and the health of his land. He argues that Tayo is the wounded king, Betonie the healer, and the Laguna reservation is the wasteland.

Another critic, Laura Coltelli, asked Silko in an interview if it was not the case that the story stressed the importance of women and their role in society. Silko answered by saying that the role of women in society was part of the theme but not all of it. Suzanne M. Austgen writes from a different perspective in her analysis of the novel, "Leslie Marmon Silko's Ceremony and the Effects of White Contact on Pueblo Myth and Ritual." She says that the novel "emphasizes the important role that storytelling plays within the Pueblo culture" (Austgen npag).

In her interviews and publications, Silko emphasizes the importance of stories to the Laguna Pueblo culture. In *Critical Fictions: The Politics of Imaginative Writing*, Silko writes that "the stories are always bringing us together, keeping this whole together, keeping this family together, keeping this clan together. 'don't go away don't isolate yourself because we've all had these kinds of experiences' . . . This separation not only endangers the group but the individual as well-one does not recover by oneself" (Silko 86). The different perspectives given illustrate of the variety of opinions, thoughts and critiques of “Ceremony”.

L. M. Silko’s believes that Silko is determined to preserve literary treasures for future generations. She knows that her Indian culture is threatened with extinction, and even because of its oral tradition. In the past, books by white writers either romanticized red men or pictured them as bestial warriors and ravishers of women. Silko presents another point. The characters in her novels, on the one hand, preserve Indian traditions, think positively about the world, maintain rituals as a means of psychological and physical healing from 500 hundred years of conquest and preasure. On the other hand, she presents another type of characters: war veterans, people lost in the society between two worlds: the white and the Indian world who can not adapt to any of them. These are people without roots, values and principles. They are sunk in anger, in the sense of inferiority to white people. They try to forget the pain of forever lost and distorted native lands in pubs. They are people without any humanity.

1. The importance of rituals in Indians life

The environmental wisdom, rituals and spirituality of Indians is legendary. All living creatures of nature: animals trees were respected as equal in rights to humans. Indians hunted animals , but only for food, and the hunter first asked permission of the animal's spirit. Among the hunter-gatherers the land was owned in common: there was no concept of private property in land, and the idea that it could be bought and sold was repugnant. Many Indians had an appreciation of nature's beauty as intense as any Romantic poet.

Religious beliefs varied between tribes, but there was a widespread belief in a Great Spirit who created the earth, and who pervaded everything. The pantheistic tone was far stronger than among Christians, and more akin to the pantheism of William Wordsworth. It was linked to an animism which saw kindred spirits in all animals and plants.

The Indians viewed the white man's attitude to nature as the polar opposite of the Indian. The white man seemed hell-bent on destroying not just the Indians, but the whole natural order, felling forests, clearing land, killing animals for sport.

Indians had rituals on any events and occasions in their life. They believed that spirits would help them in their happiness and their misfortune. They organized ceremonies from their childhood to death, when a new born child had to be blessed and sacrificed to a new life, when a child became a young man or a woman, when they married or died, when they went to the war, when they wanted to solve any problems or disagreements. They were in very close relations with their deities and nature. Indians worshiped all living creatures and nature like gods, and gods helped them during ceremonies in return. They did not start any serious job without asking for a piece of advice of their gods and nature and they performed ceremonies with dances and songs what was essentially important to them.

There are some important rituals in Indians life that I would like to portray : the Purification ceremony, the Vision quest, the Sun dance, Smudging, the winter dance, the Making relations ceremony, the Salmon ceremony and a powwow ceremony.

The Purification ceremony is commonly referred to as the sweat lodge, but this is a misnomer, says William J. Walk Sacred, a Cree medicine man: “When you come out of a purification lodge, you do not feel the same as when you come out of a sauna. The ceremony is a rebirthing process. There is something that happens in a spiritual sense that is powerful and uplifting.”

The Indian word for the purification ceremony is oenikika, which means the breath of life. It is a process of renewal through the integration of the spiritual and physical. Walk Sacred explains, “Just think of this as a marriage ceremony that takes place within yourself. The ceremonial leader is the medicine man. He is a representative of the spirits, who works within the invisible realm, in order for you to become aware of the healing process within yourself. “

The nature of the ceremony differs from tribe to tribe: Walk Sacred explains the many facets of preparing for a Cree ceremony: When you want to begin, you find a medicine man, and you offer a pouch of tobacco. Tobacco represents a person’s Spirit. Offering tobacco is how you ask the medicine man to work on your behalf in the spiritual world. It is not like a payment of money; this is his obligation. Once you have taken upon yourself the role of medicine man, it is incumbent upon you to do this healing work when someone comes to you with this offering. So, you come to him with your specific desire. You tell him if it is a broken leg you want worked on, or if it is an alcohol or drug problem, or something in the non-physical world. You bring your request to the medicine man.

At this point, he will give you your responsibilities: he will tell you how to set up the ceremony and what you need to do. You might have to prepare food. Once you ask for a ceremony, anyone who knows about it can come and request a specific healing within the ceremonial function. You might be asked to prepare a specific type of food, like buffalo soup. The people who work in the spiritual world tell the medicine man what they need. This is an offering, and it represents the humbling of our spirit.

The beginning of the ceremony is a time of prayer and contemplation. There are specific songs that are sung for bringing in spirits, for talking to spirits, for constantly giving praise and gratitude, for constantly giving acknowledgements to the great mystery for all the gifts of life. A lot of is done telepathically, through the communication of energy waves. After everyone has given their prayers, the medicine man calls the spirits in. The medicine man is in the center. This is not the center of the lodge; it is the center of the universe. It represents the center of life. And that center exists within each of us. Honoring that center brings the non-physical world into the

physical one. So, the medicine man represents the spirit of the God source, and by so doing, he creates an energy that allows the non-physical world to interact with the physical world.

The vision quest ceremony is held when people do not know the reason why they are put on earth. We want to know what we need to accomplish in life for our highest benefit, and, in turn, the benefit of the world. The vision quest can reveal our life's purpose, but it is arduous journey into the core of our being that we should only embark upon with sincerity. William Walk Sacred journey into the core of our being that we should only embark upon with sincerity. William Walk Sacred cautions, "It is very important for people to realize that this is not fun and games. Going into the spiritual world is very serious. If the intent is not clear, the spirits will not give the vision. The most important thing is being clear in your heart as to what you are seeking for yourself and the people of the world."

The Sun dance ceremony is the predominant tribal ceremony of Great Plains Indians, although it is practiced by numerous tribes today as a prayer for life, world renewal and thanksgiving. On a personal level, someone may dance to pray for a relative or friend, or to determine their place in the universe, while on a larger scale, the sun dance serves the tribe and the earth. Indigenous people believe that unless the sun dance is performed each year, the earth will lose touch with the creative power of the universe, thereby losing its ability to regenerate.

The tribes learned that the sun dance consisted of various elements. There was the ritual of the sacred pipe, the purification ceremony, monthly prayer ceremonies, and a yearly ritual.

The dual meaning of this ritual is that when water is thrown onto the rocks, the heat does not merely cleanse us from the outside. It also goes all the way into our hearts. We know that we must suffer the ordeal of the heat in order to purify ourselves. In that way, we re-emerge from the sweat lodge at the end of the ceremony as new men who have been shown the light of the wisdom of our spiritual heritage for the first time. This allows us to participate in all of our daily tasks with the fresh remembrance of our position on earth, and our continuous obligation to walk on this earth in accordance with the sacred ways.

Smudging is a common practice among Native Americans for the cleansing of energy through the burning of sage, tobacco, and sweet grass. These substances emit certain smells that are pleasing to the Great Spirit: "Sweet grass grows high in the Rocky Mountains, and is known as the grass that never dies. It is a gift from the Creator, and one of the great smells for reminding us of the mountains and the open air.

Smudging plays a central role in traditional healing ceremonies because it is believed that once negative energies are cleared out, a sense of peace and relaxation take over, putting spiritual difficulties to rest. Western medicine primarily looks at physical causes, and often does not consider the spiritual well being of the individual. You have to understand that there is a big difference between healing and curing. Curing is a quick fix and will only be long-term if the spiritual site is fixed. Smudging is often combined with other modalities that get to the root of illness, such as talking to a shaman, taking long walks, fasting, praying, and engaging in purification ceremonies. is performed by

The Winter dance is a ceremony for the renewal of the earth. It is performed to invoke heavy rains so that root crops will grow to provide sustenance for humans, and to keep animals alive for man to hunt. The winter dance is performed for four days, from eight in the evening until nine the next morning.

During the winter dance itself, Spirits call out in the form of songs. The songs are personal statements about ethical and moral life, about community, about Spirit presence, and about the origin of the song. This exchange between the spirits and human beings is called Samish.

The four day ceremony attracts wet heavy snow, then a frost and a cold spell, followed by more snow to get moisture down into the root crops.

The Making of relations ceremony is held to reunite the alienated members of the family and to cure loneliness. Loneliness is one of the worst feelings we can experience. Native Americans use the Making of relations Ceremony to overcome alienation, and to create a sense of community and continuity among people. This is a ritual that we have for making a new relation. To Native Americans, the worst thing that you can call a person is an orphan. It means that the person is disconnected, that they have no relations, that they have no blood line. These things happen in the past. The mother and father would be killed or disease would take them.

Anyone who loses their relatives can partake in this ritual. Another family will say, "This one is pitiful. We need to help. So, let's make this one our aunt, our brother, our sister, nephew, niece, grandson, or granddaughter." The Making of relations ceremony insures that no one is an orphan, no one is alone.

This ceremony insures that no one is left to feel alone in the universe, and that this is vital as we are social beings who depend upon each other. A person is taken in as a relative. That relative

system is as strong as blood. It must be, because the welfare of the group can sometimes hinge upon one individual. And if that person is feeling disconnected, he or she may fail you.

The Salmon ceremony is performed in order to thank the earth for its supply of food. When salmon start to appear, the people hold a ceremony where they sing songs and offer the first salmon caught that year back to the river. This ceremony is similar to saying a prayer before eating.

The powwow ceremony is the most widely practiced public musical form among Native Americans in the United States. At powwows, such as the annual Gathering of Nations in Albuquerque, New Mexico, members of drum groups sit in circle around a large drum. Drum groups play in unison while they sing in a native language and dancers in colourful regalia dance clockwise around the drum groups in the centre. Familiar pow-wow songs include honour songs, intertribal songs, crow-hops, sneak-up songs, grass-dances, two-steps, welcome songs, going-home songs, and war songs. Most indigenous communities in the United States also maintain traditional songs and ceremonies, some of which are shared and practiced exclusively within the community.

The aroma of sage incense pervades as Indians and non-Indians socialize, share fry bread, and sell, buy. These social and spiritual celebrations occur in increasing numbers across North America. Physical, social and spiritual power is produced by moving bodies of Native American powwow dancers as they execute specific choreographic styles.

In the Indian the spirit of the land is vested; it will be until other men are able to divine and meet its rhythm. Men must be born and reborn to belong. Their bodies must be formed of the dust of their forefathers' bones.

Society and art played a very important role for Indians, too. The Iroquois, living around the Great Lakes and extending east and north, used strings or belts called *wampum* that served a dual function: the knots and beaded designs mnemonically chronicled tribal stories and legends, and further served as a medium of exchange and a unit of measure. The keepers of the articles were seen as tribal dignitaries.

Pueblo peoples crafted impressive items associated with their religious ceremonies. *Kachina* dancers wore elaborately painted and decorated masks as they ritually impersonated various ancestral spirits. Sculpture was not highly developed, but carved stone and wood fetishes were made for religious use. Superior weaving, embroidered decorations, and rich dyes characterized

the textile arts. Both turquoise and shell jewellery were created, as were high-quality pottery and formalized pictorial arts.

Navajo spirituality focused on the maintenance of a harmonious relationship with the spirit world, often achieved by ceremonial acts, usually incorporating sand painting. The colours—made from sand, charcoal, cornmeal, and pollen—depicted specific spirits. These vivid, intricate, and colourful sand creations were erased at the end of the ceremony.

2. The role of a woman in Indian community

Grandmother

Paula Gunn Allen (Laguna/Sioux/Lebanese)

Out of her own body she pushed / Silver thread, light, air / And carried it carefully on the dark,
flying / Where nothing moved. / Out of her body she extruded / Shining wire, life, and wove the
light / On the void / From beyond time.

This poem illustrates the importance of a woman in Indian's life. Many Indian tribes believe that their origin as a culture stems from the female. In contrast, people from the Judeo-Christian tradition believe in a singular male deity. Moreover, women in Indian creation stories and female spirits central to every life are viewed in a positive light. Contrary to Eve, who collaborates with a serpent to expose man to evil, woman is viewed as the source of life, providing sustenance and protection as well as certain cultural values, such as truth.

Women were and still are the main preservers of language, traditions, Indian culture, the Indian attitude of the world.

In literature (written by Vine Deloria in "Cluster Died For Your Sins") there are described many tribes where there was the cult of a woman. Many goddesses were female. They were the protectors of land, nature, humankind, relations, the weather. Indians respected and prayed to them. The Apache believed that they are descendants of Child of the Water, who was kept safe by his mother, White -Painted Woman, so that he could slay all the monsters and make the world safer for the Apache people. They pray to both White-Painted Woman and Child of the Water. For the Sioux, White Buffalo Calf Woman gave the people the gift of the Pipe, and thus a gift of Truth.

Women were warriors, healors...

So, firstly, in literature (written by Welch "A Winter in the Blood, Gerald Vizenor, Paula Gunn Allen) women were warriors. Native American writers (Welch, Gerald Vizenor, Thomas King) write about tribes, that were as male centred as the Europeans that invaded them. These groups had male gods and spirits and placed great importance on male-focused behaviour, such as warfare and hunting. Even so, they recognized the importance of women to their society. Beverly

Hungry Wolf, a Blackfoot woman, tells a modern version of a story about how men came to live with and depend on women:

Although women usually did not take up arms and go into combat, there are numerous stories of women rushing onto the battlefield to protect or substitute for their fallen husbands or brothers. In many instances, they were later given the privilege of fighting or they earned war titles that gave them the privilege of singing and dancing with warriors forever after.

Secondly, in literature (written by Linda Hogan) there are stories of Indian women as rulers and leaders. Men held their women in high esteem, the peoples who practised female-centred religions not only revered their women and treated them with respect but also placed a great deal of responsibility in their hands. There are described cases in stories by modern Native American writers when in the Southeast and Northeast, prior to the arrival of Europeans, Indian groups often instances, whether male or female, Indian rulers were not allowed to wield the kind of absolute power enjoyed by European monarchs. Many accounts from early European explorers and travellers tell of Queens who were significant personages in their tribe. However, there now exists little evidence as to the extent of their rule, powers, or authority.

Although in many tribes women were not the public representatives of their group, they may have taken part in making decisions concerning trade with other peoples. From the Southeast to the West and down through Mexico there operated an extensive trade network in which women participated.

Our ancestors considered it a great offence to reject the counsels of their women, particularly of female governesses. They were esteemed the mistresses of the soil. Who cultivates our land, kindles our fires, but our wopmen?

Thirdly, women had more power in a family and community than men. They were the heads of the family. In most, a woman resigned herself to a marriage arranged by her father, brothers, or uncles, but she retained control over her own body and behaviour, over her children, and over the property she held prior to matrimony or had produced during the marriage. In many groups, divorce was common and relatively easy. Usually, women simply moved back to their family's dwelling or asked their husband to take his belongings and leave.

In many ways, however, Indian women were vulnerable members of society. They needed to rely on a man to hunt for them and otherwise provide what women could not. If a woman lost her male provider through divorce, marriage, or death, another male would have to take his place. Often, for example, a man might marry his wife's widowed or divorced sister in order to provide for her and improve his own household's ability to provide for relatives. So, women were protected and cared by all members of the society in the Indian community by unwritten laws.

In many of the north eastern, south eastern, and south western tribes, women enjoyed a great deal of power and authority within their family. These tribes were usually matrilineal, meaning that when a man and a woman married they took up residence near the female partner's family. The groups also tended to be matrilineal: Children were born into, and received their identity from, their mother's family, and they traced their lineage through their mother. The inheritance of personal property and the right to hold office were traced through the female line as well. Women held authority over property and its uses and over the disposition of material goods that came from their own work as well as that of men. The distribution of food and other resources was their responsibility.

A group of family members who have a shared identity and property and trace their descent from a common ancestor is called a clan. For the female-centred Iroquois and Cherokee, every clan had a clan mother who nominated and deposed chiefs and subchiefs, those hereditary and nonhereditary male leaders who conducted the business of governance. Women joined men in councils and functioned as representatives of women and children. Mothers of those slain in battle and the clan mothers held sway over prisoners and could intervene in the conduct of war and peace.

Indian women enjoyed economic, marital, and political privileges unknown to most white women. Some felt that unlike white women who demanded rights, Indian women earned them because they engaged in "manly labor". Indian forms of marriage were advantageous to women, noting that Indian women could, like their husbands, dissolve the marriage at will and that a woman would retain all the property she possessed at the time of marriage. Indian women generally felt and expressed the sentiment that the women were enslaved by their husbands.

Fourthly, women were responsible for gathering and cultivating plants; they also were responsible for developing all the extraordinary varieties of vegetables and fruits used by Indian peoples. Among these were corn, beans, squash, potatoes, peanuts, peppers, sunflowers,

tomatoes, and plants from which dyes and medicines were made. Some of these plants make up many of the major food crops in the world today.

The fifth point is that women throughout the Indian world possessed knowledge about everyday health care, though in some tribes women were acknowledged spiritual leaders and healers. Although, spiritual leaders were primary male, and many were healers in the sense that they administered spiritual and physical medicine, but women, however, were often responsible for treating minor ailments and served as medical consultants for their people. Because they knew about plants, they could prepare herbal medicines and determine what foods were best for an ill person. They devised various treatments for particular ailments or conditions. They were also midwives, taking care of pregnant women and their infants.

Those who feed and nurture the people are indeed valued members of any society. But also treasured are those who have an eye to imagine, design, and construct useful material objects, such as shelters and various types of boats. Inuit artist Pitseolak explains in a 1971 autobiography that her family made long and dangerous hunting journeys “in sealskin boats, which were wooden frames covered with sealskins. They used to be called the women’s boats because they were sewn by the women.” Honored as well, both then and now, were the women who constructed houses for their family- hogans for the Navajo, the wickiup for the Apache, the tipis for Plains people, the chickees for the Seminole. In Pueblo society, the women made mud into bricks and build adobes, replastering these mud houses every year. In the past as well as today, women are skilled craftspeople, producing beautiful, essential objects for decoration, everyday or ceremonial use, and exchange.

Nowadays Indian Women of native societies have in large part been responsible for their people having something to celebrate in the modern era. They have taken on the work of reviving traditional languages and ceremonies, helping to preserve and distinguish their heritage. They have fought for their people’s rights in and out of court. They have returned to their traditional native environments to lead their people through renewal. As Marlene Brant Castellano, a Canadian Huron scholar, suggests, the women continue to bend their energies to surviving:

In modern Indian literature Native women are trying to improve social conditions, to protest the injustice of white man’s law, to practice and teach native arts, and even to run for public office. They are not breaking from tradition... Contemporary women accept the reality and try to work out their destiny in public as well as in private life.

Perhaps native communities, in once again trusting their own way of thinking, will return to traditional forms of governance and choose to face the daunting problems of the present and future under the leadership and mutual dependence of men and women. Perhaps, as well, the non-Indian world will once again recognize that the vision and strength of Indian women is essential to the Native American identity.

3. The Indian's concept of land and nature.

A famous writer Greg Sarris views Indian cultures as nature –oriented, non-hierarchical, matriarchal, and spiritual. In contrast he characterizes mainstream American society as hierarchical, materialistic, patriarchal, and ecologically unsound. Vine Deloria Jr. a pre-eminent Native essayist, argues that the landscape plays a crucial role in Native American religion, identity, and by consequence, literature. Their spatial organization, he argues, lies in marked contrast to the more temporal organization of Westerners. Raymond Fogelson writes: “The idea that land was property that could be exclusively possessed, expropriated, or alienated was foreign to native North America.” Furthermore, it has been argued that Native Americans typically have a more cyclical view of time and life rather than a more linear view. Also, a crucial hallmark of Native culture is thought to be the “relationship of human beings to all other forms of existence in a vast web of cosmic interrelationship in which humans stand at the bottom or on the periphery.” (Raymond Fogelson). While Native tribes tend to believe in a creator or creators, they rarely think of a singular deity with whom they could communicate, as do many Christians. For others, such as Cherokee writer Thomas King, community is the central feature of Native culture.

When Europeans first arrived in the Americas, they faced a new landscape expressed through oral tradition, but they did not understand the different, sophisticated ways of understanding human existence they met. They came upon a continent that was home to over two thousand cultures with their own significantly differing ways of functioning. These cultures inhabited a great variety of landscapes. Those cultures had their own shared memories of the past.

Most traditional Indian lifeways include a sense of relationship between all things, between animals, land, peoples and their language, and a requirement to seek individual, communal, and environmental balance. In Native American literature the characters in books look for the balance, whether it is between various tribal or non-tribal aspects. Balance is linked to the survival of community within specific landscapes. There is a sense of relationship between all animate and inanimate forms of being and there is no split between the sacred and the secular or between humanity and the rest of creation. split between the sacred and the secular or between

Place, self, and community are so intimately linked that loss of territory is a deprivation of psychic strength.

There is a nice witchery poem that shows the historic- American antagonism between the Indian understanding of human to nature and superior Euro-American understanding of detachment and dominion. While white and Indian attitudes are still shown to be different in this poem, Whites are described as people of destruction rather than creators.

They will kill the things they fear / All the animals / The people will starve / They will poison the water / They will spin the water away / And there will be drought / The people will starve./ Entire villages will be wiped out / They will slaughter whole tribes / Corpses for us / Blood for us / Killing / Killing / Killing.

In the poem there is given the white people's attitude to nature. The white-skinned people "grow away" from the earth when they consider nature as dead thing with no life, their alienation leads to fear towards nature. Each act of violence leads to greater and greater destruction, and as the world is made ever more dead and alien, the devastation eventually comes back upon the white destroyers. The white attitude of thought and behaviour is based upon a fatal denial of life. The white attitude of domination is shown as a fatal opposition to Indian attitude of spirituality and harmony. So, the white approach gives alienation, fear and death.

II Development

1. The importance of rituals in Indian's life in Leslie Marmon Silko's novel "Ceremony" and Sherman Alexie's collection of short stories "Ten little Indians"

In Silko's novel "Ceremony"(1977) the scene is laid after the Second World War in Laguna, an Indian reservation, also in the city and in Japan, at war. The protagonist of the novel is Tayo. He is a war veteran. He is suffering from a sort of post traumatic stress disorder which has affected him physically as well as emotionally due to the fact that he has survived as a prisoner of war in Japan. Consequently he must deal with all of the horrific memories when he returns to life with his family on the Laguna Pueblo reservation in New Mexico. To compound his problems, Tayo is half Caucasian and half Native American, so he must also deal with the added pressures of bi-culturalism. He is torn between the Native American world and the white world, and is unable to feel security. Tayo's friends and family believe that they know the nature of and antidote for Tayo's illness and depression, however it is only the Native American ceremonies which will truly help him. Tayo eventually finds peace in the Native American ceremonies.

Other characters are Old Betonie who helps Tayo to recover through ceremonies. Besides, his beloved uncle Josiah who raised him from four years old, aunt, his mother's sister, who always took care of him. There are mystical female characters like Thought -Woman, Ts'eh. They heal Tayo by ceremonies and they return him to life.

There are negative characters such as Emo, Leroy, Pinkie, the previous war veterans who lost humanity after the war. Many Indians went to the Second World War as volunteers because they wanted to be equal to the white people. But when they came back after the war to their Native country they again became lower than the white people. So, Indians lost the land, lost their pride. In the white people's world they were inferior to them and the white people looked down upon them. Therefore, Indians lost confidence, the sense of self - respect, they did not have any rights again. Some Indians started to drink, refused the Indian traditions, did not work, laughed at white women because they could not reach them and the white people humiliated them.

In the novel ceremonies play an important role in all daily Indian life. Silko's "Ceremony" begins and ends with the same word as the song/prayer – "Sunrise". Consequently, the reading of the text becomes a prayer, becomes itself in a new ceremony. The novel starts with Thought Woman's poem. The story becomes reality. The myth is merged with reality and the whole novel is as a ceremony .

The novel's opening poem describes the incredible powers that language, stories, and rituals have in Native American cultures: ceremonies are the only cure for human and cultural ailments, and stories and language have the power to create worlds. As the novel progresses, it demonstrates this power by showing how rituals are more effective than anything else in helping Tayo (the main character) heal.

Moreover, Tayo's struggle to return to indigenous cultural traditions parallels Silko's own struggle as a writer who wants to integrate Native American traditions into the structure of her novel. Instead of simply following the literary conventions used by other American and European writers, Silko develops new literary conventions that draw upon Native American cultural traditions. For example, her narrative plot follows a cyclical sense of time, like that found in Native American myths and legends, instead of a western linear sense of time. She structures the entire novel itself as a sacred ritual or ceremony. Throughout the novel, she repeatedly switches back and forth between the main plot and a series of interconnected poems such as a poem about Thought –Woman who is a creator of the universe, Corn –Woman, her sister, protector of plants, a Witches poem. Those poems are based on various Native American legends.

These interspersed poems (a beginning poem about Ceremony, a poem about corrupted war veterans Pinkie, Leroy, Harley) create a second mythic narrative that runs parallel to the realistic narrative about Tayo. Even though these mythical poems take up less space than the realistic narrative, they are equally, if not more, important than the realistic narrative. In addition, Betonie's (an old spiritual Indian, Medicine Man, who understands that Tayo can be cured only through old rituals) healing ceremony shortens the central themes and struggles throughout the novel, and it marks the central turning point in Tayo's recovery, as Tayo is suffering from post traumatic stress disorder which has affected him physically as well as emotionally because he has survived as a prisoner of war in Japan.

By making these mythic poems and ritual ceremonies such as a poem about sunrise, sacrifice of a killed dear, a poem about witches, Silko extends her authorial voice beyond first-person and

third-person narration to include the ritualistic voice of a shaman or storyteller. Thus, Silko expresses the Native American belief that ritual healing and art are intimately connected because stories and rituals have the power to heal.

In the novel there is a description of Native American healing ceremonies. They include, firstly, a sense of community. During healing the medicine man Betonie consistently uses the pronoun “we” to talk about Tayo’s illness after the war. Secondly, Tayo’s healing rely on female characters. Male figures help out, such as the Abbot or Ku’oosh and Betonie. But women, finally, seem to seal or complete the healing. “Ceremony is a tale about the power of women. Ts’eh(a symbolic Indian figure, goddess, Tayo’s beloved woman) leads Tayo through the last stages of his ceremony. Thirdly, there is one more ceremony when Tayo is cured by watching a severe death of another Indian, war veteran, Harley. Tayo had to watch the murder but he could not help because he did not want to be a participant of a severe killing. For example, Ku’oosh’s traditional rituals partially cure Tayo, but Betonie’s new complex, hybrid ceremonies are even more effective. By making Betonie’s rituals more potent than Ku’oosh’s, Silko suggests that recovering one’s cultural roots does not always mean being stuck in the past and endlessly repeating only what has been done before. Instead, Silko argues that even traditional cultures need to evolve and change, modifying to meet new circumstances and enlarging to create a broader dialogue with other cultural traditions. In this sense, Silko’s sense of rituals is not narrowly Native American but broadly multicultural.

The protagonist of the novel is Tayo. He is a young half-blood Indian, a war veteran who has just come from the Second World War. He is healing his physical and psychological wounds by returning to the old, spiritual, Indian traditions. At the beginning Tayo prays with a song that the Dawn people sang. His words and actions become completely integrated into traditional Native ceremonies. Tayo, deep down, still believes in the old ways, that everything has a story and that narrative discourse is reality. As the novel moves to order Tayo’s turmoil about what is real, it teaches its readers how to understand not only text but the events and forces in the world around us outside of the text. To do this, however the reader must change, and most people are afraid of change. Tayo knows that those who are different often are scorned and become outcasts. Both audiences must acknowledge the growth of new myths and the renewal and evolution of the ceremonies.

Tayo lives out of his dreams –whether nightmares or beautiful visions. Compared to the other war veterans who are noisy, bragging drunkards, he is shy and often silent. But he is no coward or weakling. When one of the young men, Emo, speaks insultingly of his own people as well as

of Tayo's mixed ancestry, Tayo is so enraged that he becomes violent in his inability to express his feelings. On this occasion he comes close to killing Emo.

In the novel there are many old myths. One of them is about a Thought –Woman who is the ruler of the universe, she is a creator, “whatever she thinks, appears”. Indians believed in many female goddesses who protected the land like mothers, so, Indians prayed to this goddess to be successful in life.

“Thought –Woman, the spider, named things and as she named them they appeared. / She is sitting in her room thinking of a story now./” (L.M.Silko “Ceremony”)

Another story is about two sisters Iktoa'ak'o'ya – Reed Woman and Corn Woman. A Reed Woman was a deity of rain. Indians life and land depended on rain. The other goddess was very diligent. She took care of plants. But they depended on each other.

“It was summertime and Iktoa'ak'o'ya – Reed Woman was always taking a bath./ She spent all day long / sitting in the river splashing down / the summer rain./ But her sister Corn Woman worked hard all day/ she scolded her sister for bathing all day long. / There was no more rain then./” (L.M. Silko “Ceremony”)

Another poem is based on worshiping of nature. Indians had rituals praising the beauty of nature. Therefore, everything flourished and grew up and people enjoyed life.

“They noticed hummingbird/ was fat and shiny / he had plenty to eat. / Three worlds below this one everything is green./ all the plants are growing / the flowers are blooming./” (L.M. Silko “Ceremony”)

The boundary lines between the real world and the world of legends and between the modern and the ancient, though continuing past are very thin in all of L.M. Silko's work. Indeed, her sense of time is not at all a European one. The reader feels that in her poems about Thought – Woman, Corn –Woman, a poem about witches all things are very much interconnected. In a poem about witches the Indians regarded the white people, bad spirits and corrupted Indians as witches. The white people are considered to be violent, willing to kill animals and Indian people and destroy the land, the trees. The metaphorical link between the symbol witches and the white people is very clear. So, the reality and symbolism is very much interconnected.

“They will kill the things they fear/ all the animals / the people will starve./Entire villages will be wiped out /They will slaughter whole tribes.”/

L.M. Silko's world is a world of both tremendous changes brought by Western civilization and a lasting strong natural environment in which everything is possessed of the power to be and become.

The myth, or poetry, sections pace the progress of the prose. They lead the reader to new events, comment on action, but always lend a sense of order to the fragmented prose, just as myth often does to reality. Myth creates meaning in the prose. One myth is about Thought Woman. What she thinks, as the story is told, it comes into being. When readers are able to merge myth and reality, they are able to see the novel as a ceremony and as a prayer. The reading of the novel becomes a ceremony and a prayer. So, the myth is related with the reality. Another myth is one of Tayo's healing ceremonies, a Navajo sing. As is traditional, the ceremony is to be completed after the sing by the sick man, a Laguna named Tayo. The Veterans' Administration doctors have labelled battle fatigue is a struggle to make a decision about death. Tayo tries to struggle with the illness in two ways: self –erasure and killing an agent of death. After the ceremony he would not allow to kill him, or most importantly not change him into an agent of death. Therefore, after symbolic, ceremonial healing Tayo regains physical and psychological health in his real life.

At the end of the novel, when Tayo realizes that there are no boundaries either in space or time. "Ceremony's" form reflects this. When Tayo returns from the war, his reality is poor, he is sick physically and psychologically. He is far away from traditions, humanity, light spirit. But when he is healed by such honest Indian figures as a Medicine man, old Betonie, also, by such remarkable, mystic and mythic female figures as Night Swan (Tayo uncle Josiah's girlfriend, who is strongly associated with Ts'eh and therefore also to Thought –Woman) and Ts'eh (a mysterious person, a goddess, Tayo's beloved woman) who cure him by means of ceremonies. When he is healed, he feels the relation with his relatives, he feels beloved by his relatives and he loves them. He is a harmonious human being. So, at the end of the novel he returns to his roots and his real life, his cured inner world and Tayo's dreams and reality merge.

There is one more myth of destroyers. Destroyers were the white people, they were called witches.

"They fear the world./ They destroy what they fear. / They fear themselves./ Corpses for us/ Blood for us / Killing/ Killing/ Killing/ And those they do not kill / will die anyway/ at the destruction they see /at the loss./" (L.M. Silko "Ceremony")

In a poem the white people grew away from the earth. They do not respect the nature, the trees and the animals. This alienation leads to fear towards nature. The white people's behaviour is based upon denial of life. So, the white attitude gives alienation, fear and death.

In such poems as "Where Mountain Lion Lay Down with Deer" we see Silko's non-Western sense of time. Things from past and present coexist and change each other: Silko uses myths from the past. She repeats the words "old woman, old stories" deliberately. Because she wants to relate the old traditions, rituals that were used by Indians in the past with the present lost reality. Everything is changing but Silko wants to say that old traditions should be applied in the real life and they should not be forgotten. Because Indians would not survive if they do not keep to the old traditions. So, the past and the present coexist in the novel.

"I smell the wind for my ancestors / Pale blue leaves / Crushes wild mountain smell / Returning to faded black stone / Where mountain lion lay down with deer." (L.M. Silko "Ceremony").

The image of the mountain lion and the deer may remind one of the biblical lion and lamb, but the animals have different roles in this place, are charged with a different mythic power. Silko says later in the same poem that "The old ones who remember me are gone / How I danced in snow – frost moonlight / Distant stars to the end of the Earth..."

Her words are not a lament, however. They do not convey a sense of loss but rather a deep continuity which goes beyond conventional ideas of individual reality. Although she is a child of more than one culture, her voice clearly speaks for the Native American way – not a way which is gone, but one which continues beyond time, changing and unchanged.

One of the scenes of Tayo's healing is a scene of ceremony in a mine. Critic Sharmoon Zamir claims that the mining scene at the conclusion of Leslie Marmon Silko's "Ceremony" is based not on American Indian sources but on T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (407). Zamir suggests that the sacrifice of Harley is reminiscent of Western Grail narratives, in which the hero must witness a horrible physical death and heal himself by refusing to participate in the violence (408). Harley is a previous war veteran who now is a drunkard, lost from Indian traditions. He is sacrificed and killed by torturing. His legs and arms are pierced. According to old Indian traditions Tayo can be healed only when he is watching a severe murder and he is not participating in the same violence. In contrast to Zamir, I believe that the scene, which takes place at the uranium pit, contains one of the book's strongest examples of American Indian ritual as well as the elements of a traditional Native American ceremony.

Critic Allen explains that unlike Grail narratives, the scene at the mine includes traditional songs, prayers, dances, drums, ritual movement, and dramatic address that make it distinctly Native American. It also embraces elements of a ceremony, particularly movement, that often have a hypnotic effect, especially through repetition. Participants in such ceremonies can reach an altered state of consciousness in which emotions are redirected to a greater awareness, and breath, heartbeat, thought, and emotions are all one.

Ceremonies are held for many reasons: the changes in season, crops, and “purification”, especially of war veterans (Ruoff 20). Tayo, a veteran of World War II, suffers from what contemporary readers would call post-traumatic stress disorder; he needs help to return to his tribal ways. When Tayo returns from the war he suffers from psychological and physical diseases. During the war he shot Japanese soldiers. It was difficult for him because, according to Indian spirit, Asian people were Indian’s brothers. When he killed soldiers and captives he shot his close relatives and became a murderer. So, he had to forget all human feelings, compassion, love in order to make the act of killing. So, after the war he had to regain human feelings again to become a harmonious person. The mine scene depicts the final ceremony in his purification or becoming a healthy and honest Indian again. In *The Sacred Hoop*, Allen states that Tayo’s illness is the result of his separation from the land, his people, and American Indian ceremonies (119). He must enter into certain rituals to heal his personal illness, the deterioration of the physical landscape, and the disintegration of the community (123). The height of this cosmic ceremony occurs at the uranium pit when Tayo hides behind a boulder and watches Emo, Leroy, and Pinkie (war veterans) torture Harley (an Indian who betrayed them). The war veterans torture Harley because they are corrupted and they wanted to kill Tayo but he hid from them and they murdered Harley. Tayo watches the severe scene and do not participate in torture. In this way he is healed.

Drumming occurs in the scene as Pinkie slams a tyre repeatedly on the hood of the car. There is repetition, four times, as Emo shouts to Harley, “We told you [...] We told you [...] We told you [...]” Emo, Leroy, and Pinkie move ritually, throwing dry tumbleweed into a fire, “holding them high over their heads and circling the fire before they let go” (248). The fire grows higher; the drums beat on the car hood; Harley is dragged from the car and stripped, and Tayo nearly loses his consciousness: “his heart went numb in his chest, and he wasn’t aware of his own rapid breathing any more” (251). This part of the ceremony climaxes with Emo laughing and Pinkie stepping on Harley’s throat. The wind suddenly kicks up and the clouds dramatically battle the moon, shedding light and dark on the battleground in front of Tayo speaks to himself and addresses the universe. He sees the stars and suddenly understands that he is just one part of a

long story taking place under these same stars. Tayo achieves a greater awareness of himself and his role in life.

The sacrifice of Harley is vital for Tayo to witness and to understand part of his purification ceremony. Until that moment, Tayo had been wrong in his belief that if he had died in the war, instead of his cousin Rocky, or if he had returned home in time to help his grandfather, Josiah, the land would have received rain and his people would not be suffering from drought. Tayo does not yet understand death or that the death of two people cannot influence the “prosperity of the entire tribe” (Allen 124). This misunderstanding prevents Tayo from feeling whole and blocks his growth as a tribesman and contributing member of his community.

Allen states that Tayo needs to learn that “the departed souls are always within and part of the people on earth, that they are still obligated to those living on earth and come back in the form of rain regularly (when all is well), so that death is a blessing on the people, not their destruction’ (Allen 124). By witnessing the sacrifice, Tayo begins to understand that Harley made his own choices and that Tayo is not responsible for Harley’s death or for the deaths of Rocky and Josiah. This understanding removes a layer of punishing guilt that Tayo has felt and allows him to embrace the natural order of life and proceed with his purification rituals.

Emo and his friends leave the scene, but the ceremony continues. Tayo begins to move, even though he is exhausted. He is “experiencing prayer”, another element of the traditional ceremony (Ruoff 21). Even though “his bones and skin are staggering behind him,” he moves forward with a sense of purpose because he has achieved physical and spiritual harmony. He also gains a sense of the “sacredness of place”. As he walks, he begins to dream, even though his eyes are open. Suddenly he is no longer walking toward the hills; he has shifted in time. He is a baby in back of Josiah’s wagon. He hears the wind and sees the rumps of the two mules pulling the wagon. He was going home then, and Tayo realizes that he is going home now, too.

According to Allen, the purpose of a ceremony is to integrate the individual into the tribe and to create a sense of tribal community (63). Tayo has learned through the ceremony at the mine that he is not alone. He understands that he is a part of the tribe, the land, the old rituals, and the universe. Tayo has realized that he truly wants to be part of his tribe, that he has found meaningful work to do, and that he is able to take meaning from the tribal customs. Purified, he is now ready to join the tribe. He heads to the elders in the village so that his tale will be added to the long story that has been in the telling since time began.

In all of her works, Silko emphasizes the importance of oral narrative for restoration and creation. But, on the other hand, the war stories told by the veterans cannot grow, like Native narratives: they are literary narrative dead ends, tales of killing and violence, which turn white women into objects of lust, and thus pervert the matrilineal culture the veterans have grown up in. Therefore, bad behaviour and traditions can not grow and cure people. The perversion of behaviour will never help to live harmoniously.

“We went into this bar on 4th Ave., see / Me and O’shay, this crazy Irishman. / We had a few drinks, then I saw / These two white women / Sitting all alone.” (L.M.Silko)

Silko emphasizes that vets like Emo and Pinkie and Leroy don’t have a good destiny in the story because they have forgotten how to love their fellows and seek only for their own individual gain, glory, and witchery-inspired revenge. They do not keep to the Indian traditions and they remained barbers returned from the war. They are dehumanized because in the war they slaughtered Japanese captives while Tayo is not. Emo, Leroy, Pinkie are dehumanized because during the war they killed Japanese without any feeling of compaction, they became rude, cruel, distorted, corrupted. Besides, in the war Indians felt important as they were equal to the white people, they had self –esteem. But when they returned to America from war they lost their rights, they became humiliated by the whites. Because the white people exploited them again. So, Emo, Pinkie and Leroy became so angry and revengeful. On the contrary, Tayo regains human feelings by returning to Indian traditions of love to people and nature. One difference is that Tayo is loved and feels love. He has had the loving guidance of Josiah before the war and a loving connection to Ts’eh after it. Ts’eh is a mystic, symbolic female deity who gives him love and guides him in his life curing him with ceremonies. Another difference is that he has a different connection to the ancient Laguna myths and prophecies than the others have, and he undergoes the titular ceremony that purifies him and gives him a positive role to play in the history of the Laguna. Whereas Emo, Pinkie, and Leroy are destined to re-enact the Ck’o’yo rituals that Betonie discusses in his story about the witches’ conference, Tayo becomes the culture hero of the Lagunas. Witches, in Indians’ understanding, are white people, bad, corrupt Indians, who lost traditions, and negative deities. Those severe deities called the white people who destroyed Indian lands and slaughtered innocent Native American people. The novel suggests that the reconnection with Tayo’s Laguna culture is necessary to his becoming whole again.

There is one more ceremony that serves as Tayo’s recovery. Kaupata is the rain god who has never lost, whose game is to control not only human life but also the forces of nature (here, the

rain clouds) that make life possible. In the second version, Spiderwoman (a woman who creates stories) gives Sun Man (a god of the universe) the story he needs to visualize the defeat of the Gambler; she tells him that Kaupata will gamble “everything: even his life” in the star game, and that when Sun Man correctly states what’s in the bags hanging on the east and south walls “everything -/his clothing, his beads, his heart/ and the rainclouds/ will be yours”(173-4).

Silko’s Kaupata story ends here, rainclouds were liberated and Kaupata was apparently disabled, his vision was taken from him and out of his reach. But the novel does not end here, and neither does the traditional Kaupata backbone story. In the longer story which Silko’s version ends, separating Kaupata’s vision from him adds an important part to the whole story, but only at the cost of wiping out the life of the People, as blind Kaupata gets angry that results in fire and flood. A solution that preserves the life of the stars (including the Sun) is not necessary the best solution for all of life.

Another scene of healing is an unorthodox mixed – blood Navajo medicine man, Betonie, who performs a ceremony on Tayo. He foresees four elements of a journey that Tayo must make into the mountains above Zaguna to perform his personal ceremony. During his journey, Tayo remembers many things from his past, the war, the slaughtering of Japanese, his fear and confusion in life and understands their significance for his health and the health of Laguna Pueblo. He also meets a mysterious spirit woman who helps him see how his story, his ceremony, is part of a larger ceremony to defeat the forces of destruction and death. He rejects the vicious actions of some of his war buddies as they torture one of the returned veterans. Upon his return to the Pueblo, he has the power to help the community return to harmony.

In S. Alexie's collection of short stories "Ten little Indians" the importance of rituals is mentioned in some stories: "Do not go gentle" and "What you pawn I will redeem" because S. Alexie describes Indians who live in the city and only some of them keep to the old traditions. Those Indians who keep to the Indian traditions, practice rituals in their life are positive Indians, spiritual, kind-hearted, keeping to family and community traditions. The rituals among urban Indians are a little different from Indians in the reservation. Indians in the city partially or totally mixed up with the white people. So, Native Americans use only some of rituals and in some cases of their lives.

In a story "Do not go gentle" the protagonist is a young, married Indian who has a sick baby boy. He is a positive Indian. He loves and protects his wife. He adores his sick son and is eager to do everything in life to return him to life. When he was in hospital near his son's bed, he understood that he as a man can not help his son who was in comma. He and his wife sang powwow songs to their baby, playing with hand drums. It was a part of a ritual to awaken a sick baby boy. Indians believe that they can heal ill people with the help of particular rituals, herbs and natural methods. He and his wife were in depression. So, this young man in desperation went to a toy shop and wanted to buy a toy for his child but accidentally he appeared in a sex – toy shop and he bought a vibrator called Chocolate Thunder. He bought this equipment because he saw it in a movie like a miracle vibrator. He needed a miracle, so he performed a ceremony of curing people. His wife switched on the vibrator and started shouting , screaming and vibrate.

"It was my wife who grabbed Chocolate Thunder and used it like a drumstick to pound her hand drum. She sang a brand – new song that echoed up and down the hallways of Children's Hospital. She sang like ten thousand Indian grandmothers rolled into one mother. All the while, Chocolate Thunder sang with her and turned the whole thing into a healing duet. "

Therefore, this performance was a part of a ritual to heal a sick son. The main characters used a vibrator as a musical instrument to perform a ritual of healing. They did it in torture because they did not know how to help his son. The miracle appeared. Their beautiful baby boy opened his eyes and the couple was very happy. They saved the life of their boy by means of rituals.

In a story "What you pawn I will redeem" the protagonist is a middle –aged, homeless Indian. He is negative character ,on the one hand, because he is a drunkard, abandoned his two wives

and two children, lost his job. But on the other hand, he is a spiritual Indian by Nature. He loves his dead grandmother so much that he wanted to buy the ritual regalia from a pawnbroker. It was a part of a ritual to bring his beloved grandmother to life if he puts on those clothes and dance a ritual dance. The regalia cost one thousand dollars, so he was looking for all ways to earn money. Firstly, he spent all the money in a bar with other drunk Indians but he was returned to life by an honest white policemen. Finally, after a lot of troubles he was given the regalia free of charge by the pawnbroker.

“I took my grandmother’s regalia and walked outside. I knew that solitary yellow bead was part of me. I knew I was that yellow bead in part. Outside, I wrapped myself in my grandmother’s regalia and breathed her in. Cars stopped. They all watched me dance with my grandmother. I was my grandmother, dancing.”

So, the main character performed a ritual danced with his grandmother’s regalia. By means of this ceremony, he returned his grandmother to life.

The role of a woman in L.M.Silko novel “Ceremony” and Sherman Alexie’s collection of short stories “Ten little Indians”

The women’s importance and power in Silko’s novel “Ceremony” is great. According to Maria Moss many deities in the novel are female. The patterns affecting Tayo’s healing rely on female characters. Male figures help out, but women seem to seal or complete the healing. While “Ceremony” is on the surface a tale about an alienated man, it is even more a tale about the power of women” Indian women represent the transitional link between old and new. Especially Indian women possess a rich culture strongly related with love of nature and an understanding of their place as part of the harmony of the natural environment. They respect the power of nature and they teach their children to love and respect nature. Also, ordinary women have more power than men and it is seen in all cases. The lineage of the child is traced through the mother, so it’s a matrilineal system. The house is the property of the woman, not the man. The land is generally passed down through the female side because the houses belong to the women. When the house needs to be replastered with the traditional adobe and mud plaster, the women come and plaster the house. The women own the houses so the women maintain what they own.

In the novel there are many famous Indian female goddesses. One of them is Ts’eh. Critic S. Allen thinks that she is key to Tayo’s healing. She may be linked with Ts’its’tsi’nako, or Thought – Woman; Tse-pi’na, or Mount Taylor, and Yellow Woman. “Ts’eh is the matrix, the creative and life –restoring power, and those who cooperate with her designs serve her and, through her, serve life”. Appearing in man’s clothing, she is a strong female character who helps complete Tayo’s healing, guiding him to and shepherding Josiah’s lost herd of cattle. Ts’eh, in other words, helps Tayo “to see”. “She is like the seed pods she collects, which are “for light”. The light of the stars, and the moon penetrating the night.” (S. Allen). She is linked to the cattle, who “stand in the thick yellow light from the edge of the sun, “whose “eyes shone yellow, “ and whose hides “caught needles of light.” And Ts’eh is linked to the sunrise, which Silko invokes at the beginning and ending of “Ceremony”. Vision, the healing light, and the return to origins.

There are many good and bad spirits in “Ceremony”. Ts’eh, who may be called, Montano Water Mountain Woman, goddess or Elk Woman, still prefers Summer, now represented by Tayo. There is one more figure in “Ceremony”. It is the Hunter who is Ts’eh’s husband. When this old man discovers Tayo’s love for Ts’eh, he is not at all distressed. He smiles and makes no objection to her going off with Tayo. When Ts’eh comes to join Tayo where he has pastured the spotted cross-breed cattle, the novel makes it more and more evident that she is a mountain spirit helpful to all forms of life.

Ts’eh participates in so – called “character constellations.” Silko compares Ts’eh to the other female characters in “Ceremony”. She connects and replaces Tayo’s mother. She is also linked to Helen Jean, Tayo’s aunt, and Night Swan, uncle Johuah’s girlfriend. These secondary figures are all in one way or another versions of Ts’eh. “the entire cast of female characters in “Ceremony” are individual changing of Spider Woman –each is “She at a lower voltage”. (Edith Swan, “Healing”). Ts’eh embodies the version of womanhood.

Ts’eh is also called Elk Woman. She is, also, Tayo’s beloved woman. Ts’eh tells him, “The witches’ highest ambition is to gut human beings while they are still breathing, to hold the heart still beating so the victim will never feel anything again. When they finish, you watch yourself from a distance and you can not even cry – not even for yourself.” (L.M.Silko “Ceremony”) When Tayo (the protagonist) returns from the mountains, from Ts’eh to the pueblo, the old men of the tribe take him into the Kiva. As he tells them of his experiences, they realize that he has seen A moo’ooh, the Elk Woman. The pueblo’s shattered connection with the spirit world is now re-established and they know the drought will end. The old men become one of them, but they also acknowledge his mythic identity as the bringer of blessings, the gatherer of seeds, the lover of the Elk Woman.

Ts’eh’s influence is important because the protagonist Tayo finds his identity by rediscovering in himself and in all of creation what traditionally has been called the “feminine” in his soul. His true manhood had been violated when he was supposed to kill people, especially since they looked like his relatives. When he was forced as a soldier to suppress his “anima”, he was driven insane. It was difficult for him to suppress the sense of humanity when he was forced to kill Japanese in the war. But the memory of childhood experiences and tribal stories reawakens his sensitivity and his nurturing instincts which, in the end, make him more, not less, of a man.

Ts’eh reawakens Tayo’s belief in a balanced world which he dimly remembers from tribal stories. She representative of earth, rain, wind, and sky, but also of the thought power that

controls the elements. Her “storm –pattern blanket” indicates her ordered strength. At times Tayo feels that Ts’eh is just a superstition, that she “meant nothing at all; it was all in his own head.” (L.M.Silko “Ceremony”) Her lineage or family seem to be unknown. Her voice can be unreal as an echo. On another level, however, she is very real: He had not dreamed her; she was there certainly.

In “Ceremony” Ts’eh is related with other deities such as Mother Earth or Mother Corn, also, she is a manifestation of Thought – Woman, the balance of the universe. Silko may not have fully succeeded in portraying Ts’eh in terms of this double vision, but her intention is certainly to

Visualize Tayo’s ability to overcome the split between body and mind, which Westerners had trained into him, by having him experience Spider – Woman’s wholeness through Ts’eh. The Laguna people are “woman –dominant; they are a woman – centred people”. (L.M. Silko “Ceremony”).

Ts’eh is important as a female character because she influences Tayo’s sensitivity and humanity. Tayo’s self – understanding as a male is not just biologically determined; it changes with the influence of women. Gender identity has to be taught.

So, Ts’eh is a reference to the spirit – woman who teaches Tayo to learn how to use herbs and to gather plant seeds with great care. She returns vitality to the arid desert for Indians, all embodied in Tayo.

Another deity in “Ceremony” is Night Swan, who is strongly associated with Ts’eh and therefore also to Thought – Woman. In fact, Silko describes these two characters in a similar manner in, especially in terms of colour. Silko’s description of Night Swan begins with her room and the “long white curtain” across the doorway and the “fluffy ball of cotton” stuck in the screen. The Hunter (Ts’eh’s husband) appears with “his hair long, tied back with white cotton string in the old style the men used to wear”. Silko continues, mentioning Night Swan’s “long brown hair, curled and piled on her head in long ringlets, the style of some past time”. In Native American culture, colours have great importance as representations of directions, feelings, animals, and values. “Rarely is the presence of colour simply incidental”.(Gill and Sullivan’s Dictionary of Native American Mythology states). The images and colors of these two mysterious characters continue to become intertwined as the Hunter’s face is seen as “wide and brown, and smooth and soft like an old woman’s” (Silko “Ceremony”). Again Silko repeats the images of old and brown, perhaps hinting at a time long gone but still present within these people.

Although Silko repeats her mention of white and brown when describing Night Swan and the Hunter, the colour that she emphasizes in these passages is blue. Significantly, Gunn Allen suggests that blue represents the rain Tayo has prayed for and is also closely associated with Ts'eh. Blue colors surround Night Swan: "open-toe blue satin slippers," "blue satin" kimono, "blue armchair with dark wooden feet carved like eagle claws, " "blue flowers painted in a border," and "blue sheets" (Silko, Ceremony). Whereas fewer references to the colour bluer occur in the Hunter's passage, they seem to be very traditional and significant: "he had long strings of sky- blue turquoise in his ears, and silver rings on four fingers of each hand "; and he "tied delicate blue feathers to the tips of the antlers". (Silko, Ceremony").

Tayo's uncle Josiah teaches Tayo the traditional rituals and who eventually leads him to Night Swan, with whom Tayo's healing ceremony begins. This becomes clear when Tayo leaves Night Swan's rooms, and she tells him, "You do not have to understand what is happening. But remember this day. You will recognize it later. You are part of it now." (Silko, Ceremony). Night Swan seems to be making a reference to Ts'eh and the healing Tayo finds with her.

The relationships between Night Swan, the Hunter, and Josiah are so apparent that it is likely that Tayo's healing ceremony is a circular journey in which certain connections must be made. Perhaps, then, Night Swan, Josiah, Ts'eh, and the Hunter are all points on one circle that must be connected for Tayo to move on and complete his cycle of healing.

There are two more deities in "Ceremony" who influence Tayo's healing. They are Reed Woman and Corn Woman. Reed woman is a goddess of water and Corn woman is a goddess of harvest. They are related with Tayo, the protagonist. When Tayo was at war, he cursed the rain. When he returned home, he believes that his prayers, when he was in Japan, at war, he cursed the rain that was pouring, made so far from home, have caused the drought in much the same way that Corn Woman causes the water to disappear:

"Corn Woman got tired of that / she got angry / she scolded / for bathing all day long. / Iktoa'ak'o'ya – Reed Woman / went away then / she went back / to the original place down below. / And there was no more rain then.../"

So, Tayo feels guilty of Reed woman because he cursed the rain in Japan , in the jungles. Finally, it stopped raining in Japan but it does not rain when Tayo is at home. He feels guilty for all Indians.

Silko also portrays ordinary Native women. One of them is his dead mother Laura. She wandered away from the communal fold to become a prostitute. "There had been a picture of her once, Tayo carries it with him to bed and whispers to it. But one evening, when he carried it with him, there were visitors in the kitchen, and his aunt grabbed it away from him. His aunt did it because Tayo was a son of a Mexican, his mother was a prostitute and it was a shame for their family and aunt did not want to show the photo. He cried for it and Josiah came to comfort him; he asked Tayo why he was crying ..." (Silko "Ceremony"). Tayo is unable to tell Josiah, "So he held onto Josiah tightly, and pressed his face into the flannel shirt and smelled woodsmoke and sheep's wool and sweat. He even forgot about the picture except sometimes when he tried to remember how she looked". (Silko "Ceremony"). Laura, Tayo's dead, framed mother, is the ultimate source of Tayo's deep sickness, of his simultaneous connection and unconnectedness with his past. The loss of Laura initiates Tayo's alienation from his tribal identity, and the losses of Rocky, Josiah, and Josiah's Mexican cattle all work as versions of this original loss. Tayo is alienated from his tribe because his biological father was white. Tayo's mother Laura, whose name suggests the ethereal muse of the poet Petrarch, must be reconfigured for Tayo through such sublime female characters such as Night Swan and Ts'eh. (L.M.Silko "Ceremony").

One more native woman is Tayo's aunt. She took Tayo when Tayo's mother Laura died. Laura was a prostitute. She was driven away from the reservation because she was a shame to the family. Laura did not have a permanent place to live and did not have time to take care of her son. Tayo was four years old when his mother died. Laura's sister took Tayo to her home to live together with her own son Rocky. Tayo's aunt loved her son but not Tayo because his father was white. When Tayo returned home from the war to his aunt's home, she took care of him, cured him but she always thought about his dead son Rocky who died in the war.

There are some more corrupted Native women characters. They appear in a bar drinking together with other Indians. Not only men, but also women were lost and confused. Women lost their power as leaders in the family. They could not participate in rituals that were the part of their lives. They lost their leading role in Indian society. So, some women degraded together with men and they started drinking.

Old women are especially respected. They are very wise, they leaders in the family. During the ritual when the dead deer is taken home "and Old Grandma would put a string of turquoise around its neck and put silver and turquoise rings around the tips of the antlers" (Silko Ceremony). So, Old women were the links between the present and the past. They kept to the Indian traditions and they taught their children not to forget the old rituals and respect nature.

In Sherman Alexie's collection of short stories "Ten little Indians" (2003) the woman's position in a family, in a community is very important. S. Alexie emphasises Native women's intelligence, wisdom, better possibilities than men to earn money, kindness, a sense of leadership. In Alexie's stories the majority of Indian women are shown as more intelligent than Indian men. Especially great respect is to Indian grandmothers. They keep to the old traditions and they form a link between the old and the new generation. So, in Alexie's stories Native women are revered as educated and intelligent persons, good mothers, and unforgettable grandmothers. In his stories the scenes are set in the city.

The woman's position was particularly emphasized in some stories of the collection: "The Search Engine", "What You Pawn I will Redeem", "What Ever Happened to Frank Snake Church".

The first story, "The Search Engine", concerns Corliss, a nineteen-year-old sophomore at Washington State University. Alexie begins the story by creating a difference between a white literary writer, who paraphrases famous writers in order to seduce women, and the humble but serious reader, Corliss, who is Indian. For the white man, literature, more specifically poetry, is only a means to an end, whereas for Corliss, who has a near obsession with literature, "the huge number of books confirmed how much magic she had been denied for most of her life, and now she hungrily wanted to read every book on the shelf." (Sherman Alexie, "Ten little Indians"). While Alexie's and the speaker's sympathies clearly lie with Corliss, she is less than saintly and unashamedly admits that "she judged people based on their surface appearances, justifying her actions with "Lord Byron said only shallow people do not judge by surfaces" (Sherman Alexie, "Ten little Indians"). Furthermore, just as the young man uses literature as a means to a personal end, Corliss has used her ethnicity as a means through which to receive favors, scholarships, and assistance. Alexie describes her as "a resourceful thief, a narcissistic Robin Hood who stole a rich education from white people and kept it," but he defends her actions: "For five centuries, Indians were slaughtered because they were Indians, so if Corliss received a free coffee now and again from the local free-range lesbian Indiophile, who could possibly find the wrong in that?" (Sherman Alexie, "Ten little Indians"). So, S. Alexie describes his character with sympathy as an Indian girl who is very intelligent, likes books. She is making

her carrier in a university. She is a girl and she is a pride to her relatives. Her father and uncles support her financially and see in her their future.

Corliss overcomes Indian hatred of white people and thinks: “it was easy to hate white vanity and white rage and white ignorance, but what about white compassion and white genius and white poetry?” (Sherman Alexie “Ten Little Indians”). Rather, Corliss seeks to understand other cultures and break down ethnic boundaries, claiming at one point that she sometimes feels “like a white Jesuit priest” (Sherman Alexie, “Ten little Indians”).

Corliss does not understand her father’s and uncles’ disdain of poetry, but she blames it more upon physicality rather than solely blaming Indian culture. Corliss accepts the fact that her relatives did not have a possibility to study literature, so, they do not understand it.

Corliss claims that “she never met one human being more interesting to her than a good book.” (Sherman Alexie, “Ten little Indians”).

Corliss is looking for a famous Indian poet Atwater, who she romanticized. But her meeting with Atwater and her discovery of his identity as a reservation Indian has a significant impact upon Corliss. When she asks him for his real name, he leaves and she does not try to follow him. She reconsiders her ideas about herself and her definition of being “Indian”. She understood that ethnic identity is not as important as the content of Atwater’s poetry. S. Alexie emphasizes that Corliss is intelligent and she tries to evaluate the poetry rather than a sense of Indian identity.

In the story “Flight Patterns” Alexie emphasizes that family is the main thing that saves people, especially men, from violence. The main character William, a successful urban Indian executive loves his family so much that he is always afraid that strangers may attack his wife and daughter. So, the woman’s influence is very big. Alexie emphasizes that the wife makes William human.

“During longer business trips, William’s nightmares became more violent as the days and nights passed. If he was gone over a week, he dreamed about mutilating the rapists and eating them alive while his wife and daughter cheered for him.” (Sherman Alexie, “Ten little Indians”).

William tells Fedaku, an Ethiopian taxi driver who takes him to the airport, how much he loves his family: “Sometimes I worry their love is the only thing that makes me human, you know? I think if they stopped loving me, I might burn up, spontaneously combust, and turn into little pieces of oxygen and hydrogen and carbon” (Sherman Alexie, “Ten little Indians”). William’s overwhelming belief in love and family is undermined when he talks to Fedaku, who tells him

how he fled his native country, Ethiopia, after he refused to continue bombing insurgent groups. Talking to Fedaku inspires William with love for his family, and he rushes to call them from the airport. The story ends with him telling his wife, “I am here, “ signifying that he has come to fully appreciate how lucky he is with his family and his wife.

In the story “The Life and Times of Estelle Walks Above” Alexie shows a strong Indian woman Estelle, who is a single mother, an educated woman, a feminist who may attract many other women. In truth, Estelle may be drawn to the feminist movement because, within the movement, other white women look up to her because she is Indian. So, she is famous among white women.

In the story “What You Pawn I Will Redeem” the main character is Jackson Jackson who is a homeless drunkard, but he has a mission to regain his grandmother’s fancy dancing regalia. His grandmother is dead long ago but he loves her so much that he can not forget her. He blames himself that he did not help her but if he had her regalia he would help her and he would renovate the link between her and herself. Jackson finds his grandmother’s fancydancing regalia in a pawnshop. The extent to which family is important to his character is apparent in his monomaniacal, twenty – four – hour hapless pursuit of the money. He insists, “I know it is crazy, but I wondered if I could bring my grandmother back to life if I bought back her regalia.”(Sherman Alexie, “en little Indians”).

The Indians concept of land and nature in L.M. Silko novel “Ceremony”

Silko’s “Ceremony” (1977), was the first of the important new novels by Native American writers to make the environment a central concern. Native Americans have a legend that earth and humankind originated as thoughts in the mind of Grandmother Spider, and today they communicate through stories. Poet and scholar Paula Gunn Allen, writes that “the gap between isolate human being and lonely landscape is closed (through the stories)”. The typical hero in Native American fiction, instead of seeking his fortune in unfamiliar territory, comes home: to a past, to a people. To Silko, this homecoming is literal as well as metaphoric, involving Tayo’s renewed ties to the Pueblo and the earth.

That the earth is a sentient being engaged in the struggle for her body and soul is not, to a Native American, a pathetic fallacy but a reality. “The earth, is being as all creatures are also being: aware, palpable, intelligent, alive” (S. Allen). In “Ceremony” Silko portrays the earth as human and humans as the earth. She uses similes, metaphors, images to show the land as the human body: “a drum sounds like the song of a deeper life, the beating of earth’s pulse” (Silko, “Ceremony”); blanket – clad Indians, gathered for a song in the hills, are “breathing mountains”(Silko “Ceremony”). The Hill Indians with their traditional ways and legs “rooted to the earth” embody earth in magical mystical ways. They are like Night Swan and Ts’eh in “Ceremony”, incarnations of Ts’its’tsi’nako, Grandmother Spider, or Mount Tse-pi’na, “the Woman Veiled in Clouds.” Tayo says to his lover, “You never told me your name.” And she replies, “I am a Montano” (Silko, “Ceremony”). A mountain, Flesh – and – blood beings such as Ts’eh and the Hill Indians appear and disappear mysteriously throughout the novel.

At the beginning of the novel, many of the characters are like zombies. War veterans, Indian women who lost their husbands at war remain confused, without roots, without land and pride. They are like children without mother. Motherlessness – the state of being cut off from the maternal, life – giving force – has made them seem less than fully alive. The main character in “Ceremony”, Tayo, is literally motherless – the woman who gave birth to him is dead. When the novel opens, he has just returned from fighting a war (ironically, for the “mother country”) on foreign soil, an act that leaves him metaphorically orphaned; he lacks a sense of belonging in one place. Furthermore, Tayo has alienated himself from mother earth by cursing the jungle rain that “grew like foliage from the sky”(Silko “Ceremony”). Violence and grief have emptied Tayo of his sense of Self; everything is Other. He believes he is “white smoke” because it has “no consciousness of itself”. (Silko “Ceremony”). “He can not talk to you ,” Tayo tells the doctor in the Veterans Hospital, referring to himself. “He is invisible.”Tayo thinks of himself as an

“outline” only, inhabiting “a gray winter fog on a distant elk mountain” (Silko “Ceremony”). He is like the walking dead, an inhabitant of a misty purgatory where his soul hangs in the balance.

Paradoxically, the greater Tayo’s sense of disconnectedness to the earth, the greater his resemblance to it. He returns to a drought – weary reservation, grey and without colours. The sky is a washed – out shade of blue, the sun – baked clay beneath his feet the colour of dried blood. Tayo’s soul withered. In the novel Tayo’s tortured soul is compared with the tortured earth. The earth has to recover from drought. The earth is alive. It needs remedy, it needs rain. Therefore, Tayo has to use ceremonies, rituals to heal himself, to return to his roots and to call the rain, to cure the earth.

Some corrupt war veterans such as Emo see earth as an object to be manipulated for their own ends. Then the earth revenges. Earth is a woman “complaining through an open mouth, moaning sometimes and sometimes roaring with rage “as sweating laborers drive pipe into her, inch by inch. Marshalling the great hot pressure of inner earth, she fights back, launching a piece of pipe skyward, like a bullet.” (Silko “Ceremony”). In Silko’s novel, a particular poetic image of a sunrise, “the blue sky streaked with red light, like a belly opening under a knife” is filtered through the violent sensibility of the destroyers.

The destroyers, white people and corrupted Indians, are disconnected from woman as mother, lover, or earth. Unlike Tayo, however, they have severed those ties through acts of will, not happenstance. For instance, a remorseless Harley bolts for the nearest bar, abandoning his family’s sheep to wild animals that kill thirty head. At his lowest point, Tayo still wonders what became of Uncle Josiah’s half- breed cattle. The medicine man, Betonie, perceptively integrates Tayo’s search for the cattle into his healing ceremony. Their homecoming is Tayo’s homecoming, too.

Earth and humanity suffer from the aggression of motherless men. “The land is ravaged and covered with scars and so are the broken people. The earth bleeds black oil from the steel pipe driven like a bullet into its core. Some of us have broken all apart, like the earth just did. Oil greed infects Indians and whites alike. Like blood poisoned by gangrene, greed spreads from rotting limbs to healthy ones.

Earth is not defenceless. Outraged, it harnesses the power of nature to annihilate, or at least discomfit, its enemies. Sometimes the sky spits rain. At other times, rain billows to earth in sheets or freezes into destructive balls of hail. Sun scorches flower gardens. The wind is always

hot and dry, never refreshing. Earth grumbles and moans from gas currents below the surface. Earth's bones are "fiery" with anger. So, it is like a human being.

Silko weaves images of drought and flooding, barrenness and fertility together with illnesses of the main characters. Those are real events and conditions as well as metaphors for a spiritual landscape of hopelessness and despair. Tayo believes he brought on a seven – year drought by cursing the jungle rain. The effects of the curse, Silko writes, "were everywhere in the cloudless sky, on the dry brown hills, shrinking skin and hide taut over sharp bone" (Silko "Ceremony"). In this image, earth is a dried – up hag dying of heat and thirst. "Her children have been torn from her in their minds; their ...unified awareness of and with her has been destroyed..." (S. Allen).

The parched and broken earth can not care for its wounded or grieve for the dying. It is alive but heartsick. In "Ceremony" the characters are related with Earth like magical beings, literal embodiments of earth in various moods and seasons. Corn Woman starts a spat with reed Woman, whose sulks bring drought. Hummingbird, aided by Fly, Buzzard, and Caterpillar, serves as a messenger between starving people and alienated earth. Sun Man rescues the clouds from Gambler and restores them to their mother, the earth. In contrast, the destroyers have cowboy characters such as Pinkie and Leroy (war veterans). Emo denies the maternal, life – giving force inscribed in the letters of his name a partial anagram for Earth Mother. He even rejects his own identity as an Indian: "Here is Indians' mother earth. Old dried – up thing." (Silko "Ceremony")

For Native Americans, the illusion that the "aware, palpable, intelligent, alive" (S. Allen) earth can be purchased, was unbelievable. The fact that land can be traded for money, printed on the bark of dead trees describes the extent of white people's rupture with mother earth. As Silko writes in her legend about how white people came into the world: "Stolen rivers and mountains / the stolen land will eat their hearts / and jerk their mouths from the Mother" (Silko "Ceremony").

Healing begins when the people return to the mother. In "Ceremony", a drought –ridden land and dislocated man are healed by Tayo's figurative and literal return to the womb, by his sacred sex with Ts'it'tsi'nako in her incarnations of Night Swan and Ts'eh. The seven –year drought of his adolescence ends the afternoon that Night Swan –described alternatively as ageless, "like the rain and the wind" and as old and wrinkled" (Silko "Ceremony") – loves Tayo. "Outside, the thunder sounded like boulders cracking loose from the high cliffs and crashing into narrow canyons". (Silko "Ceremony").

Years later, something – perhaps Tayo’s frozen, sad, tortured soul – cracks loose inside him, like “the edge of a steep river bank crumbling under the downpour” (Silko “Ceremony”), when he and Ts’eh make love. Their sex is described as the merging of elemental and human bodies. Afraid of losing himself inside Ts’eh, Tayo repeats the “trail marks “ to himself. Melting, he surrenders himself to the warmth closing “around him like river sand, softly giving way under foot, then closing around the ankle in cloudy warm water”(Silko “Ceremony”). A few weeks later, when Ts’eh joins him on the mountain, Tayo no longer fears losing himself in her because she, and the earth she represents, are no longer Other: “he could not feel where her body ended and the sand began. “(Silko “Ceremony”). By the ceremony’s end, Tayo’s sense of being incorporates everything loving and life-affirming: earth, mountain, anima, even lower –case mother. Nature is feminine which began to thaw during lovemaking. Later, Tayo vows to gather seeds for Ts’eh and plant them near the sandy hills at the right time, thereby mothering the earth in ways that he himself was never mothered:

“He would gather the seeds ...and plant them with great care in places near sandy hill. The rainwater would seep down gently and the delicate membranes would not be crushed or broken before the emergence of tiny fingers, roots, and leaves pressing out in all directions.”(Silko “Ceremony”).

In “Ceremony “ regeneration comes about when Tayo harnesses his human power to that of the earth.

In “Ceremony” the metaphor of the spotted cattle, as related to Native American people is very important. “These cattle were descendants of generations of desert cattle, born in dry sand and scrubby mesquite, where they hinted water the way desert antelope did.”(Silko “Ceremony”).

Josiah (Tayo’s dead uncle) reinforces this image when he tells Tayo that cattle are like any living thing. If you separate them from the land too long, keep them in barns and corrals, they lose something. The stomachs get to where they can only eat rolled oats and dry alfalfa. When you turn them loose again they go running all over. They are scared because the land is unfamiliar and they are lost. So, it is an allusion to lost and scared Indians.

Indians are landless and motherless and they are confused. Because without roots and earth Native Americans can not be full-fledged people and can not survive.

This type of spiritual understanding of animals or a particular animal is not regarded as imaginary in Native American culture, and those who do have such a relationship with a particular species of animals are often regarded as healers or holy people.

So, in Indian's understanding all items in Nature: earth, plants, animals, birds, mountains are alive like human beings, they are equal to people and should be honoured. Only in this case, when Indians live in harmony with nature, respect and do not harm it, Nature will be like a friend to people. It will give good harvests and people would flourish.

Conclusions

It is generally thought that a Native American literary renaissance began in the late 1960s with the publications of Sherman Alexie and Leslie Marmon Silko and other Indian writers. So, with the New Age movement, there has been an increase in interest in virtually all things deemed to be Native American or created by Natives. Critic Andrew Macdonald says that mainstream America's sense of a lost past, a life in harmony with the Earth leads some to look back to pre-Columbian America and the Indians of that period as a lost utopia. The white people should understand destruction of Indians not to destroy them in the future.

With the changes of the society in America, there appeared two types of Indians: the positive type of Indians who keeps to the traditions of Indians, despite the humiliation of whites, the loss of rights and land, the negative type of Indians who lost humanity after the atrocities of war, confused and humiliated by whites.

Two famous Indian writers appeared after 1960s: Sherman Alexie and Leslie Marmon Silko. S.Alexie (1966) is one of the most prominent Native –American writers of his generation. His works are „Ten little Indians“, „Indian killer“. Alexie regards the New generation movement with suspicion, viewing it as a misguided attempt on the part of white people to usurp Native culture largely for their own selfish purposes. Alexie refuses to submit to mainstream standards for a watered – down, romanticized version of Native American literature. He is determined to remain fiercely independent, without catering to any specific audience, except in his desire to help his audience think about the issues he writes about, even if his position on those issues are radical, disturbing, and confrontational. Many people have been reading literary fiction for entertainment and a form of escape. “I want books that challenge, anger, and possibly offend.”(Sherman Alexie).

L.M.Silko (1948) is an accomplished Native American contemporary writer. One of her famous works is a novel “Ceremony”. She is determined to preserve literary treasures for future generations. She knows that her Indian culture is threatened with extinction, and even because of its oral tradition. The characters in her novels, on the one hand, preserve Indian traditions, think positively about the world, maintain rituals as a means of psychological and physical healing from 500 hundred years of conquest and pressure. On the other hand, she presents another type of characters: war veterans, people lost in the society between two worlds: the white and the

Indian world who can not adapt to any of them. These are people without roots, values and principles.

L.M.Silko in a novel “Ceremony” described one of the identical features of Indians: the importance of rituals in Indian’s life. The novel’s opening poem describes the incredible powers that language, stories, and rituals have in Native American cultures: ceremonies are the only cure for human and cultural ailments, and stories and language have the power to create worlds. As the novel progresses, it demonstrates this power by showing how rituals are more effective than anything else in helping Tayo (the main character) heal.

The protagonist of the novel is Tayo. He is a young half – blood Indian, a war veteran who has just come from the Second World War. He is healing his physical and psychological wounds by returning to the old, spiritual, Indian traditions. His words and actions become completely integrated into traditional Native ceremonies. Tayo, deep down, still believes in the old ways, that everything has a story and that narrative discourse is reality.

Another identical feature in Silko’s “Ceremony” is the role of the woman. While “Ceremony” is on the surface a tale about an alienated man, it is even more a tale about the power of women. Indian women possess a rich culture strongly related with love of nature and an understanding of their place as part of the harmony of the natural environment. Ordinary women have more power than men.

In the novel there are many famous female goddesses. One of them is Ts’eh. She is the key to Tayo’s healing. Appearing in ma’s clothing, she is a strong female character who helps complete Tayo’s healing. Ts’eh is linked to the sunrise, which Silko invokes at the beginning and ending of “Ceremony”. Another deity in “Ceremony” is Night Swan who is strongly associated with ts’eh and to Thought –Woman. One of the ordinary women is Tayo’s dead mother Laura. The loss of Laura initiates Tayo’s alienation from his tribal identity. Laura was a prostitute and Tayo’s biological father was white, so, it strengthened Tayo’s alienation from the tribe. Another woman is Tayo’s aunt who raised him from childhood. She did not like Tayo because Tayo was half- blood.

In S.Alexie’s collection “Ten little Indians” the woman’s position in a family, in a community is very strong. In his stories Native women are revered as educated and intelligent persons, good mothers, and unforgettable grandmothers.

In Silko's "Ceremony" the earth is being as all creatures are also being: aware, palpable, intelligent, alive. The idea that land was property that could be exclusively possessed , expropriated, or alienated was foreign to native North America.

In conclusion, it should be stated that in S.Alexie's collection of short stories "Ten little Indians" and L.M.Silko novel "Ceremony" there are analyzed such identical features of Indians: the memory of rituals in Indians life, the role of a woman and the concept of land and nature.

Summary

The aim of the paper is to analyze the characteristic features of Indian's identity: the memory of rituals in Indians' mentality, the position of a woman in Indian's life and the Indian concept of land and nature in Sherman Alexie's collection of short stories "Ten little Indians" and L.M.Silko's novel "Ceremony". Two types of Indians are described: a negative who is a drunker, lost his humanity and a positive type who keeps to the traditions of Indians. In L.M.Silko's "Ceremony" rituals play an important role in all daily Indian life. Ceremonies have the incredible power, they are the only cure for human and cultural ailments, stories and language have the power to create worlds. Rituals are more effective than anything else in helping Tayo (the main character) heal. In "Ceremony" Indian women represent the transitional link between old and new. They possess a rich culture strongly related with love of nature and understanding of their place as part of the harmony of the natural environment. Ordinary women have more power than men. The lineage of the child is traced through the mother. In S. Alexie's stories Native women are from the city. They are revered as educated and intelligent persons, good mothers, and unforgettable grandmothers. Silko in "Ceremony" portrays the earth as human and humans as the earth. The earth is being as all creatures are also being: aware, palpable, intelligent, alive.

Santrauka

Šio darbo tikslas yra išanalizuoti Indėnų identiškumo būdingus bruožus: ritualų prisiminimą Indėnų mentalitete, moters rolę Indėnų gyvenime, Indėnų gamtos ir žemės suvokimas Sherman Alexie trumpų istorijų rinkinyje „Ten little Indians“ ir L.M.Silko novelėje „Ceremony“. Du skirtingi Indėnų tipai yra nagrinėjami: negatyvus, girtuoklis, praradęs žmoniškumą ir teigiamas, kuris laikosi Indėnų tradicijų. Silko novelėje „Ceremony“ ritualai vaidina svarbią rolę kasdieniniame Indėnų gyvenime. Ceremonijos turi neįtikėtiną galią. Jos yra vienintelis būdas išgydyti žmonių ir kultūros negalias, istorijos ir kalba turi galią sukurti pasaulį. Ritualai yra efektyviausi, padedant išgyti Tayo (pagrindiniam herojui). Novelėje „Ceremony“ Indėnės moterys išlaiko ryšį tarp senosios ir naujosios kartos. Jos jaučia meilę gamtai, kaip harmonijos dalį natūralioje aplinkoje. Indėnų moterys turi didesnę valdžią šeimoje, nei vyrai. Vaiko gimimo linija yra kildinama iš motinos. S. Alexie istorijose Indėnės moterys yra iš miesto. Jos yra gerbiamos, kaip išsilavinusios ir protingos asmenybės, geros motinos, nepamiršamos senelės. Silko novelėje „Ceremony“ vaizduoja žemę, kaip gyvą, žmogišką ir žmones, kurie yra lygūs žemei. Žemė yra gyva, kaip visos gyvos būtybės: suprantanti, aiški, protinga, gyva.

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