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Storyteller: an Uncommon Autobiography

الحكواتي: نوع غير مألوف من السيرة الشخصية

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Abstract

Native American women's autobiographies defy categorization and push the boundaries of literary genres. It deviates from traditional Western autobiography in that it does not necessarily follow the chronological growth and maturation of the individual; instead, it combines the individual's development with tribal teachings and emphasizes the importance of traditions for the survival of the community. This article contends that Leslie Marmon Silko's *Storyteller* is an unusual autobiography in which she experiments with multiple genres: photographs, poetry, traditional Pueblo Indian stories, and personal experience, resulting in a text that celebrates and defines her multiple identities as an American woman and a person of mixed race heritage. Furthermore, the article delves into Silko's attempts to reclaim Native American identity and history.
Keywords: (Autobiography, Native Americans, Silko, Storyteller, Community).

الملخص:

تتحدى السيرة الذاتية للنساء الأمريكيات الأصليات التصنيف وتدفع حدود الأنواع الأدبية. وينحرف عن السيرة الذاتية الغربية التقليدية من حيث أنه لا يتبع بالضرورة النمو الزمني ونضج الفرد؛ بل إنه يجمع بين تطور الفرد والتعاليم القبلية ويؤكد أهمية التقاليد لبقاء المجتمع. تؤكد هذه المقالة أن حكاية ليزلي مارمون سيلكو هي سيرة ذاتية غير اعتيادية تختبر فيها أنواع متعددة: الصور، الشعر، قصص بويبلو الهندية التقليدية، والتجربة الشخصية، مما أسفر عن نص يحتفي بهويتها المتعددة وتعريفها على أنها امرأة أمريكية وشخصية ذات تراث عرقي مختلط. علاوة على ذلك، تطرق المقال إلى محاولات سيلكو لاستعادة هوية وتاريخ الأمريكيين الأصليين.
الكلمات المفتاحية: سيرة شخصية – الأمريكيين الأصليين– سيلكو – الحكواتي(Storyteller) –المجتمع.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Theories on autobiographical writing by women and ethnic women have questioned and undermined the ideology of the autobiographical tradition since the 1970s and 1980s, demonstrating that "illegitimate speakers have a way of exposing the instability of forms" (Smith and Watson xx). Many of the connections between gender and race as socially constructed categories have been revealed in their works, as have suggestive frameworks for analyzing those connections. They have specifically called for a respect for the specificities of racial ethnic women's experiences, noting how they have been "unassimilable into the discursive paradigms of gender and race domination," (Crenshaw, 1992, p. 177). Exploration of their experiences thus provides an opportunity to rethink those paradigms while developing a more complete understanding of minority women's lives.

Contemporary Native American autobiographers, according to Hertha Dawn Wong, "often deliberately combine their Native American traditions with their Euro-American educations" (Wong, 1992, p. 10). Native American educations, including Euro-American literary traditions, will always play a role in Native American writings, but Native Americans can now celebrate these Euro-American traditions because they no longer insist on total dominance. Native Americans' ancestors are now collaborating to allow Native American writers to create distinctive Native literary works.

Leslie Marmon Silko devoted her life to reviving Native American culture and literature, and she is widely regarded as one of the most prominent contemporary Native American writers. She has infused her works with a strong Native American flavor by expertly blending diverse genres into diverse literary pieces, closely connecting the writing to nature, and incorporating oral traditions and storytelling. Her writings reflect the complexities of Native American identity formation and present harmonious coexistence and syncretism as an ideal path to Native American identity and cultural continuity preservation.

2. The form of *Storyteller*

Leslie Marmon Silko's *Storyteller* (1981) is not a traditional autobiography in the Euro-American sense. Silko, for instance, combines photographs, poetry, traditional Pueblo Indian stories, and personal experience to create a text that celebrates and defines her multiple identities as a woman, an Indian Laguna

Pueblo, an American, and a person of mixed race descent. Storyteller is an autobiography written by a Native American woman who adapted the "palefaces" writing tool by incorporating elements of her Native culture, specifically the oral tradition. Leslie Marmon Silko's attempts to reclaim Native American identity and history are examined in this article. Silko investigates how stories and storytelling shape people and communities by combining traditional and Western literary genres. She reveals Native American notions about time, nature, and spirituality. Storytellers have two characteristics that will serve as the study's guiding characteristics: genre hybridity and a non-exclusive first person voice.

Storyteller is made up of eight previously published short stories, some of which have appeared in multiple collections. However, in *Storyteller*, these short stories are presented alongside a variety of other texts and photographs that enrich and contextualize the reading of each individual story. This context is not only communal, but also autobiographical, reuniting these stories with indigenous sources. "Storyteller's layout is very deliberate," Silko says of the structure. That's exactly what I did. We circled and circled and circled. Because a lot of *Storyteller* had already been published elsewhere, I did the entire layout for it. The key to *Storyteller* is how everything is put together" (Silko, Storyteller, 1981, p. 29). Any approach to Storyteller must be based on a fundamental understanding of the work's unity. On several occasions, Silko has addressed the issue of arriving at meaning after studying her texts. Storyteller's structure is also inspired by the image of a spider web.

Elizabeth McHenry describes the book as "a collection of vignettes." ""autobiography, fiction, and ethnography" are three narrative genres combined ((McHenry, 1999, p. 115). According to Lucero, Storyteller is "a strangely volatile combination of simple autobiography and seemingly simple stories," and Silko "adds her portion to the conglomerate wisdom of a people working together for an identity" ((Wong, 1992, p. 187).

Silko is quoted in Gretchen M. Bataille and Kathleen Mullen Sands' book *American Indian Women: Telling Their Lives* as saying, "The book [Storyteller] shows how directly and indirectly, relying on my past and family, how much my 'autobiography' has become fiction and poetry." (Sands, 1984, p. 139). She also says that *Storyteller* arose from her perception of her life as a series of stories,

and that the goal of combining fragments of her life, poetry, traditional stories, and short fiction with photography is "to give the reader an idea of the relations I see and feel" and to show "how autobiography gets distilled and returns in fiction and poetry" (140).

Due to the lack of a central unified voice, *Storyteller* may be perplexing as a narrative of individuation for anyone expecting a linear account of a life. There are twenty-six illustrations and seventy-seven stories in the book. Some are family stories, while others are Laguna tales, Western short stories, and poems. *Storyteller*, which is dedicated to the many generations of storytellers who have kept the stories alive, in some ways denies common authorship as Silko gives voice to other family members who taught the young Silko the importance of stories for survival. The result, according to McHenry, is "distinctly non-traditional" (McHenry, 1999, p. 102), because it includes a mix of genres, no numbered divisions between its component parts, aside from a symbol to suggest a sparation between the stories, and an unusually positioned tale of contents at the end. According to McHenry, these characteristics should not be confused with "experimental literature," but rather "because Silko sees it as the only appropriate vehicle of expression that will contain the transcription of her fragmented and collective experience." (102) According to Silko, oral tradition is a communal phenomenon that cannot exist without the people who told these stories:

> the oral tradition depends upon each person
> listening and remembering a portion
> and it is together –
> all of us remembering what we have heard together –
> that creates the whole story / the long story of the people.
> I remember only a small part.
> But this is what I remember" (Storyteller 6-7).

Silko applies the concept of communal authorship from oral storytelling to writing. In "Skeleton Fixer," for example, she began with the version she heard Simon Ortiz tell, as she explains at the end of the poem: "A Piece of a Bigger Story They Tell Around Laguna and Acoma Too—From A Version Told by

Simon J. Ortiz" (237), and then continued the telling in writing. Many of the stories in *Storyteller* work in this way; they are Silko's written versions of oral stories, but she does not believe it is always necessary to credit an oral storyteller, because stories do not belong to the storyteller; they belong to the community. Silko clearly debunks the Euro-American myth that there is only "one true Indian version" of a story.

In *Storyteller*, Silko demonstrates sensitivity to the issues surrounding Native American autobiography. Telling one's life story is only made necessary by the contact situation, but it is problematic because narrating requires adapting to the other person's language and power structures. Krupat discusses the issue of accommodation in Native American autobiography, pointing out that many Indians chose collaborative narrations as their only means of exposing the injustices committed against their people to the world. Because defeat and acceptance are required for these autobiographies, many are written in the form of tragedies. According to Krupat, early Indian autobiographies follow the patterns established by Western autobiographies that glorify Indian fighters and "conquerors" of the "frontier." These autobiographies present an acceptance ideology for displacing "savage" Native peoples in the name of civilization, and portray the Indian as a tragic hero who accepts defeat in the struggle for civilization (Krupat, 1989, pp. 33-53). As a result, whites who have internalized colonial ideology are unable to hear the Indian resistance voice hidden behind the autobiographical model. Following tragedy or ethnographies of vanishing cultures contradicts the fact that Native American autobiographies emerged as a result of cultural collisions. The strong desire of the American Indian narrators to expose injustices and protest the suppression of their cultural and historical interpretations is emphasized in Silko's *Storyteller*.

3. Mixing Genres

Unlike traditional autobiographies, Silko forces her readers to engage in a dynamic process reminiscent of oral tradition. Bernard A. Hirsch explains how the structure of Storyteller works as an oral tradition-based teaching process. Hirsch argues that Silko's unique use of genre and voice engages the reader in a gradual process of constructing meaningful connections between the text's episodic elements. "Successive narrative episodes cast long shadows both forward and back," he writes, "lending different or complementary shades of

meaning to those that came before them and providing perspectives from which to consider those that came after" (Hirsch, 1988, p. 1). These perspectives are frequently expanded or altered as new material reflects back on them. This is an example of living oral tradition. Silko uses it in Storyteller to achieve the same level of intimacy with the reader as the oral storyteller does with the listener. Hirsch emphasizes that Silko's narrative strategy necessitates the reader's participation in the text, as well as the exploration of interrelationships between written and photographic texts (1). By participating in this process, the reader must engage in an active mode of interpretation, similar to that found in oral tradition. At the same time, this strategy is unmistakably one of defiance against the emplotment structures visible in traditional autobiographies. In addition, Silko provides a text that advances the redefinition of the concepts of author, text, and reader in the context of autobiography. Silko, for example, as an author, does not consistently explain herself but expects us to see her as the sum of her experiences.

Silko describes the text as "a way of knowing that asks the reader to "find the relationships and the meanings themselves," because the interaction of the spoken prose with the short stories, poems, and photographs "demonstrates how remembrance works" (Sands, American Indian Women: Telling Their Lives, 1884, p. 139). As a result, autobiography becomes a way to remember one's ancestors, traditions, and family.

Autobiographies frequently provide genealogical histories of cultural continuity; however, Silko depicts the breakdown in communal identity caused by European encounter in *Storyteller*. Her great-grandmother, Marie Anaya, was born in Paguate village, while her great-grandfather, Robert G. Marmon, was born in Europe. Silko tells us that her great-grandfather learned Laguna and had no desire to return to European culture; whites referred to him as "Squaw Man." Silko's account of one of her great-journeys grandfather's to Albuquerque emphasizes the importance of cultural friction in her family's history. When her great-two grandfather's sons became hungry while traveling, he decided to lead them through the hotel lobby to a café. The manager stopped them and told her great-grandfather Marmon that he was always welcome, but that he should enter through the back door if accompanied by Native Americans. Silko states:

My great-grandfather said,
"These are my sons."
He walked out of the hotel
and never would set foot in that hotel again
not even years later
when they began to allow Indians inside (15-16).

Furthermore, short fictional works like "Lullaby" promote cultural inequality. The lullaby's subject contrasts sharply with the tragic devastation of the family's life in the story. "The story serves as a microcosm of *Storyteller*'s structure," Cynthia Carsten writes. "Throughout the book, Silko creates dialogic contrasts between the harmony and disturbance of the Native American worldview" (Carsten, 2006, p. 117). Both "Storyteller" and "Lullaby" depict Native American death and suffering as a result of the white race's invasion. The first section of the book describes the difficulties of conveying the theme of survival that is central to Laguna legends and storytelling to an audience accustomed to a Eurocentric reading style. This section also includes images of numerous women who, in the face of adversity, act as courageous, resilient individuals and leave cultural legacies for future generations. Furthermore, the land is portrayed as a living figure in "Storyteller." As a result, storytellers and the land are linked in this area.

The story "Storyteller" is set in arctic Inuit territory in Alaska, which, despite its distance from Laguna, plays an important role in the story. The protagonist, an unidentified young Yupik woman described as all mythical figures, is a boundary-crosser and master of tales, much like Yellow Lady. Furthermore, like the Marmons, she lived on the outskirts; her "home was not near the village houses; it was located on an isolated bank upriver from the hamlet" ((Silko, Storyteller, 1981, p. 18). The young Yupik woman, like the protagonist of the Laguna novel, is "restless and strong." One could argue that Yellow Woman is Silko's ideal vehicle. This character represents an excluded individual who, despite her bravery and knowledge of the world beyond Hamlet, is vital to her society because of the stories she tells. This mythical figure parallels Silko's life as a storyteller on the outskirts: along the Laguna River's border, in Alaska, and, finally, on the outskirts of Tucson. The white storekeeper's poor whiskey poisons the girl's parents; she seeks vengeance for their deaths by leading the storekeeper

across the frozen river onto ice she knows will not support his weight. She is imprisoned as a result of his drowning after sliding through the ice. In terms of crime and sin, the young girl's drowning of the store clerk, as well as her subsequent insistence on her confessional speech, pose a challenge to the white reader. Furthermore, it forces a shift in the reader's perception of Native Americans' relationship with the land. In fact, the girl exacts her vengeance by embracing the ice rather than fighting it. She spends days searching on the river ice for "shadows of boundaries, outlines of roads that were slender branches of solidity extending out from the earth" (28). "Somewhere the sea and the land merged; she knew by their dark green hues that there was no distinction between them," she says of the sea and the land, as well as the land and the sky. When the borders vanished, polar ice would cover the entire continent, bringing the cold with it (27). The narrator mocks the whites' materialistic view of land and their lifeless relationship with the landscape near the end of the novel. "They thought string yellow wading would keep out the cold," she mocks their ignorance (Silko, Storyteller, 1981, p. 18). The Gussucks were forced to rely on frail, transient means of existence in order to satisfy their avaricious goals and desires, which were rooted in discord with the land and culture.

The girl has her story, which protects the continuity of Native culture and identity while also providing a means for the indigenous community to negotiate the repressive ideas of white racism. Her altered perceptions enable her to complete the story and reveal the truth about the Gussucks. The girl could have avoided trouble by claiming it was an accident, but she fought the trooper and the attorney, claiming she murdered him and insisting, "This is how the narrative must be told" (367). The grandfather repeatedly states throughout the story that it must be told "in this manner"; the story must contain these exact words.

3.1 The Indian with a Camera: Photography in *Storyteller*

Silko emphasizes the importance of the photographer in the first pages of Storyteller, noting that "a photograph is serious business" and that the photographs she includes "have a specific link with the narrative (1)." Silko implicitly advocates for visual sovereignty, or control over the camera and the images it produces, by making such a remark.

The production of stereotypical and inaccurate images of local populations has a long and tumultuous history in non-Native mainstream photography of Native Americans. Postcards and other popular media continue to caricature Native Americans, according to Victor Masayesva. He writes about his ongoing battle to maintain a distinct sense of self from what non-Native photographers envision. He observes that we Hopis are frequently the subjects of tourist cameras. The reason is straightforward. We are always on display as Southwest Indians: on napkins, on sugar and salt packets... Occasionally in rare library collections, but mostly on postcards... Despite the fact that we are inundated with collectors of Indian images, we manage to keep our essential selves away from the camera (Younger, 1983, p. 10).

According to Masayevsa, self-representation is critical in such situations. In a similar vein, Maori filmmaker Barry Barclay employs the metaphor of the camera onshore to emphasize the importance of indigenous perspectives and the resulting visual sovereignty. He claims that because "the camera is owned and controlled by the ship's owners," the white guy will always maintain a perspective from the ship's deck (Barclay, 2003, p. 10) . He believes that the white guy will always film within the national orthodoxy from which he emerged (10). Indigenous cultures, on the other hand, exist outside the national framework, "because indigenous cultures are ancient remnant cultures that remain within the modern nation state" (9). In light of this fundamental disparity, Barclay coined the term "fourth cinema," or "cinema of those onshore when they hold the camera." According to Kristy Bennett, "Fourth Cinema" "still exhibits the indigenous world insofar as it creates something the West can look at, namely the film itself; however, it seeks to create a representation of indigeneity free from the crippling gaze of the outsider" (Bennett, 2006, p. 19)). Despite the fact that Barclay and Bennett are talking about film, the themes they discuss are also relevant to photography.

In "Ontic Images," Gerald Vizenor argues that "Natives must establish their own stories; otherwise, the roots of their identities are not their own." In this way, they "construct stories of survival, a sense of presence, and distinct identities amid...many inconsistencies and contingencies" (Viznor, 2009). In this way, Vizenor demonstrates the importance of narrative and camera control.

Native American photographers can use the camera to not only confront political and historical inconsistencies, but also to build and maintain a self-representation-focused presence.

In Navajo and Photography, John C. Faris argues that images, particularly those of Indigenous peoples, must be thoroughly and critically disassembled; that what is significant is frequently outside the frame and beneath the editing (Faris, 1996, p. 139) . He implores the audience to reject stereotypes that reinforce white men's colonial narratives about Indigenous people and to make more room for self-representation through Indigenous photography (15-19). Faris photographs Indigenous peoples under surveillance, humanist, commercial, and alternative photography categories (42). Surveillance photographs, according to him, include documentary (official, unofficial, advocacy), anthropological (archive, museum), and casual (early tourist, traveler, worker in area) photographs; humanist photographs depict Indigenous peoples either sentimentally (vanishing race, lost culture, family of man) or as victims (dead, dying, nonfunctional or misfunctional in White perspective); commercial photographs frequently depict either Indigenous aesthetics (color/s) or Indigenous peoples as victims (dead, dying (42).

White or non-Native photographers typically photograph Indigenous people for surveillance, humanitarian, and commercial purposes. A single shot can be classified in a variety of ways. Faris defines alternative images as those that feature a different voice or those taken by Indigenous photographers (often containing politics, resistance, silences, effacement, and defacement) (42). Faris' use of the term alternative to characterize Indigenous photography may be problematic, as it implies a secondary rank and diminishes Indigenous photographers' vision, experience, and authority.

Faris may define Silko's images in *Storyteller* as alternative in this case; however, I contend that Silko's photographs respond in part to a history of invasive surveillance, humanism, and commercial photography. In reality, the images challenge the stereotypes and assumptions that a non-Native reader or viewer may hold in order to more effectively represent the Laguna Pueblo's

narrative and worldview. Silko's goal is to show what lies beyond the tourist's gaze.

Marmon's fascination with photography began in boarding school. "When my grandfather Hank returned from Sherman Indian School, he got his first camera," Silko recalls (1). In boarding schools, Native Americans were photographed as subjects but never as photographers. The significance of the school photographs differed from that of Silko's narrative.. Richard Pratt, for example, used photography as propaganda in a series of "before" and "after" images to demonstrate the alleged absolute transformation of Indian students from "savages" to "civilized Americans," making photography an important indicator of the boarding-school experience and, more specifically, of the control that the schools exerted over representations of their Indian students. In Silko's text, Indians appear both in front of and behind the camera. Silko used photography to follow the threads of the narrative she is narrating, rather than as an indicator of Indian culture's decline. Furthermore, photography demonstrated that Indians could incorporate Western modes of expression into indigenous repertoires of representation. In the following phrase, she describes the inclusive nature of Pueblo culture:

> Pueblo cultures seek to include rather than exclude. The Pueblo impulse is to accept and incorporate what works. . . . The Indian with a camera is frightening for a number of reasons. Euro-Americans desperately need to believe that the indigenous people and cultures that were destroyed were somehow less than human; Indian photographers are proof to the contrary. The Indian with a camera is an omen of a time in the future that all Euro-Americans unconsciously dread: the time when the indigenous people of the Americas will retake their land. Euro-Americans distract themselves with whether a real, or traditional, or authentic Indian would, should, or could work with a camera. . . . Hopi, Aztec, Maya, Inca—these are the people who would not die, the people who do not change, because they are always changing. The Indian with a camera announces the twilight of Eurocentric America (Silko, Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit, 1996, pp. 177-178).

Silko distinguishes between photography as a representational medium and the photographer whose choice imbues the image with a specific meaning that is used to advance an ideological goal. In other words, Silko not only asserts that Native Americans do not reject photography as a form of self-expression, but also demonstrates how they adapt and appropriate it in their own unique way. Tthis appropriation is analogous to indigenous populations absorbing Western technologies.

Silko's autobiography does not begin with "I was born," as is customary in Western autobiographies. Instead, she describes a Hopi basket with photographs to the reader:

> there is a tall Hopi basket with a single figure
> woven into it which might be a Grasshopper or
> a Hummingbird Man. Inside the basket are hundreds
> of photographs taken since the 1890's around Laguna (Silko, Storyteller, 1981, p. 1).

Hundreds of images and stories convey Laguna's history and identity, but not in a Laguna setting, but rather in a Hopi space: the "tall Hopi basket." Although one might be tempted to associate the basket of photographs and stories with a Laguna storyteller or Silko herself, the Hopi-ness of the basket calls this interpretation into question.

Silko introduces herself by revealing that the basket contains hundreds of photographs taken in and around Laguna in the 1890s, and she discusses the significance of these photographs in her memories of family, community, and tribe stories. She describes their connection to the story she tells about herself:

> It wasn’t until I began this book that I realized that the photographs in the Hopi basket have a special relationship to the stories as I remember them.The photographs are here because they are part of many of the stories and because many of the stories can be traced in the photographs. (1)

Silko establishes the tone of the work by defending her decision to include images, emphasizing that she will not follow standard Euro-American conventions. She demonstrates how, in contrast to Euro-American autobiographies, images in Asian autobiographies are more than just visual representations of the autobiographer's memories. Cynthia Carsten believes that

> Silko intentionally rejects the literary conventions of Euro-American genres because they are inherently unsuited to the inscription of Pueblo worldview and lived experience. In addition, these conventions have historically served to maintain and propagate ideologies of domination over American Indian cultures ((Carsten, 2006, p. 107)

A traditional autobiographical form for whites would, in fact, focus on the individual while ignoring the group. Silko centers and de-centers herself in her own narrative to teach the reader how to understand the communal dynamics of Laguna Pueblo.

With the exception of a few studio portraits, the majority of black-and-white photographs of Indigenous peoples are taken from above. The downward angle of the camera lens, whether the figure is seated or standing, demeans the subject. Individuals appear small in comparison to their surroundings and the camera. This angle choice demonstrates the power disparity between the photographer and the subject (Faris Figure 13). Her nephew, Lee Marmon, takes an aerial shot of Aunt Susie. Aunt Susie stands out against the background, unconstrained by humanist or commercial depictions of Indigenous people.

Photographs can also be used to tell stories about places by emphasizing the differences between the acquired image and the current state of the area, thereby highlighting what has vanished. Silko includes a shot in her book's "Yellow Woman" chapter to protest the destruction of Laguna land at the site of the Anaconda Company's open pit uranium mine (Silko, Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit, 1996, p. 80). Cumulus clouds hover over mesas and hills in the background, with dirt roads and what appear to be shelters or buildings visible in the foreground. It is clear, however, that people live or work on the land. According to Silko's commentary, the photograph depicts the location of an open-pit uranium mine that has wreaked havoc on the land:

> Looking east from Paguate Village at the open pit uranium mine which the Anaconda Company opened on Laguna land in the early 1950's. This photograph was made in the early 1960's. The mesas and hills that appear in the background and the foreground are gone now, swallowed by the mine. In the beginning, the Laguna people did not want the mining done on their land, but then as now, military needs and energy development far outweighed the people. (Silko back cover).

It's worth noting that the photograph that follows the mine image is of Laguna hamlet, which is populated by Laguna people. Silko claims that the Laguna people's opposition to mining was ineffective.

Silko implies the significance and necessity of seizing control of the power of visual representation and achieving a form of visual sovereignty in all of these images. She maintains that the visual is extremely complicated and that multiple approaches are required to produce a reliable visual expression of history.

4. CONCLUSION

This study contended that Leslie Marmon Silko's *Storyteller* was in fact an uncommon autobiography, where the author rejected linear development and experimented with multiple genres, primarily poetry, traditional Pueblo Indian stories, and personal experiences, in an effort to present the principles of Laguna life. Silko also employed photographs to explain her culture and to help readers understand the stories which are full of descriptions of places. She also used photography to speak for her community and to challenge White settler colonial narratives. Morever, Silko discussed the significance of storytelling and taking command of the camera. Indeed, by holding the camera themselves, Native American photographers were able to not only challenge political and historical contradictions, but also establish and maintain a presence that prioritizes self-representation.

Thus, *Storyteller* is also an autobiography in which the "I" can only be realized through self-recognition as "Others." It's the story of how one person is also a tribe, and how a tribe is also the world.

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