

A REEVALUATION OF LESLIE MARMON SILKO'S NARRATIVE(S):  
Storytelling and Mythmaking\*

JOSÉ MANUEL CORREOSO RODENAS  
Universidad Complutense de Madrid

Recepción: 3 de julio de 2023 / Aceptación: 9 de octubre de 2023

**Resumen:** El objetivo de este artículo es analizar la producción literaria de Leslie Marmon Silko. Perteneciente a la nación Laguna-Pueblo, es buena representante de cómo las historias antiguas han permeado los modos contemporáneos de hacer literatura. Así, los mitos Nativo Americanos se imbrican con una triple colonización, creando un producto cultural nuevo.

**Palabras clave:** Leslie Marmon Silko, literatura Nativo Americana, mitocrítica, Suroeste.

**Abstract:** The aim of this article is to analyze the literary production of Leslie Marmon Silko. Belonging to the Laguna-Pueblo Nation, she is a good representative of how old stories have permeated modern narrative methods. Then, Native myths of the Southwest intermingle with a triple colonization, creating a new cultural product.

**Keywords:** Leslie Marmon Silko, Native American Literature, Myth-Criticism; Southwest.

---

\* This article is part of the activities of the Research Group «Poetics and Emerging Textualities: 19<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries» (Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain), the Research Group «Multidisciplinary Studies in Literature and Art —LyA—» (Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, Spain), and the Complutense Institute for the Study of Religion.

On many occasions, dealing with such a concept as «myth» (or even religion —founded on myths—) clearly belonging to the Western tradition, to dissimilar cultural and/or religious contexts, can lead to misunderstandings or misconceptions. One of these examples is that of applying the Classical, Mediterranean, notion of myth to the literatures produced by members of the Native American nations, especially if we bear in mind the diversity of the Native American nations along the North-American continent. Discussing whether or not Native conceptions can be understood as «mythical», or even «religious», would require a much more extensive text that the limits imposed here allow (we could refer to the postulates presented by Aby Warburg and by Mircea Eliade). To these, I could obviously add the recent research work developed by the Department of Native American Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign<sup>1</sup>, in which experts concerning several areas have offered a guide on how to work with and how to interpret the phenomenon of Native American spirituality, especially for non-Native students and scholars. As known, the interrelation between myth and religion has always been a long-lasting, yet problematic one. As for many Western and Semitic cultures, religious narrations (and later dogmas) were first developed in the form of myths. In consequence, the understanding of myths has traditionally led to a wider recognition of religious systems. In relation to this, the coinage and spread of mythical narrations contributed in the past to the consolidation of religious beliefs, hierarchies, etc. This said, we have to bear in mind what has already been mentioned in relation to Native Americans, for their belief system lacks many of the characteristics as to be labelled as «religious». Thus, traditional narrations produced by the various Native American nations present many contradictions as to be included in the wide category of «myth».

Obviously, both Warburg and Eliade have had different approaches when offering an explanation of how religion and «myth» has been historically displayed by various cultures. However, both are quite interesting because, for one reason or another, both have addressed the issue of Native American «religions». In consequence, their postulates are extremely useful for the topic that is explored here. If I begin my dissertation exploring what Aby Warburg had to say, I encounter publications such as *Images of the Territory of the Pueblo Indians in North America*, where he describes his travels across the North-American continent (between 1895 and 1896) and his contact with several Native nations in the Southwest, Hopi, Navajo, Laguna, and Pueblo among others. On the other hand, Mircea Eliade, from the point of view of a historian of religion(s), discusses about some the central concepts that link systems of beliefs across the world, including several Native American cultures in his postulates. If I focus on his book *The Sacred and the Profane*, I find interesting notions such as those of the sacred place that, with

---

<sup>1</sup> Available at [The Internet Archive](#).

variations depending on the culture, are universally explored by civilizations, Native Americans included. Silko will have an interesting development of this concept in *Gardens in the Dunes*, when the Christian (Mormon) explanations of a sacred place are opposed to the notion of «temple» held by Natives (and also by other cultures, as explained below with Aunt Bronwyn):

«And this house which Solomon built for the Lord was ion length sixty cubits and in width twenty cubits and in height thirty cubits», she read, then laugh out loud, and Maytha joined her. Soon the visitors joined, and they laughed because the twins barely kept a roof over their heads, and the Bible asked them to build the Lord a big house. One of the visitors pointed out the last house built for the Lord there was up to its steeple in water, and they laughed some more.

Sister Salt waited for the laughter to pass, then she told them «a house» means a circle of stones, because spirits don't need solid walls or roofs; but it must have two hearths, not one, to be the Lord's house. The visitors all looked at her, but no one joked because Sister was serious. The circle of stones must be made at the same place as before on the riverbank below the big sandhill near Needles (Silko, 2000: 436).

Eliade also covers other topics such as the concept of *axis mundi*, applied to the Canadian Kwakwaka'wakw. When specifically dealing with the literary production of Leslie Marmon Silko, I will see how this concept reappears, for example referred to as the Enchanted Mesa.

As known, the literary production of Leslie Marmon Silko has translated into one of the most relevant voices of contemporary Native American Literature in the United States<sup>2</sup>. Some of her publications (*Almanac of the Dead*, *Ceremony*, etc.) stand as contemporary classics of North-American literature, being now considered part of the canon of this country's *belles lettres*. Her relevance as a writer during the last four decades has provoked a reevaluation of her literary production from multiple different perspectives, both in the United States and abroad. Issues such as the Native American *ethos*, the historicity of her writings (e.g. *Storyteller* or *Almanac of the Dead*), the presence of trauma —e.g. *Ceremony*, or *The Turquoise Ledge*, when discussing the story of Old Juana (Silko, 2010: 31-32)—, or the more recent approach from the area of aging studies (*The Turquoise Ledge*), constitute some of the most relevant theoretical approaches that have been imposed on the Laguna-Pueblo author's production. Joy Harjo, a contemporary poet to

---

<sup>2</sup> It is not my aim here to offer a re-evaluation of Silko's literature or significance within American cultural panorama. To reach that point, undoubtedly interesting for the reader, more extensive studies can be cited, such as those of Per Seyersted (1980), Gregory Salyer (1997), Helen Jaskoski (1998), or, more recently, Robert M. Nelson (2005) or Ami M. Regier (2012) in which general, academic approaches to her works are offered.

Silko, tries to offer an evaluation of her implications towards the renewal of Native American Literature:

For those of us [...] struggling to create from diverse traditions in literature, Silko led the way as she brilliantly merged traditional indigenous storytelling and song language with European/American forms of written story and poetry. Silko's visionary poetic storytelling made a recognizable yet fresh American literature. Each of her stories has a soul and a time and place in which it is rooted. She made a template for many of us to raise up our own creations (afterword of *The Delicacy and Strength of Lace*, 1986: n. p.).

Not surprisingly, the exploration of the mythical implications has played a crucial role towards the full understanding of Silko's literature.

As mentioned above, I will focus here in the novelistic and memoir production of Leslie Marmon Silko, with the aim of evaluating the interrelations of the concepts of «myth» within it, clearly represented as problematic. To do that, I will begin with the analysis of these ideas in her novels *Ceremony* and *Almanac of the Dead*. The first of these novels, Silko's opera prima, as known, already announces many of the themes and topics that will later be explored in her literary production. For instance, it is a magnificent account of trauma (exemplified in Tayo), and its undeniable necessity of healing. The mentioned process of spiritual recovery can only be achieved in a ceremony (not necessarily a formal one) in which storytelling plays a central role. One of the most interesting aspects *Ceremony* discloses in relation to the myth is the temporal structure Silko gave to it, from the Creation—with Ts'its'itsi'nako, Nau'ts'ity'i, and I'cts'ity'i involved, as the opening poem indicates: «[...] together they created the Universe / this world / and the four worlds below» (Silko, 2006: n. p.)— to the Recovery.

On the other hand, *Almanac of the Dead* turns into an encyclopedic novel in which the variety, extension, and depth of the topics explored make a sustainable evaluation impossible, and its plot hardly summarizable. From the mere title of the novel, the notion of myth is present, for we encounter Lecha, who is trying to translate and reconstruct a handbook on how to contact with the Underworld (the almanac of the dead), in relation to Native cosmology. As it will be seen in *Gardens in the Dunes* (and its presentation of the Messiah), a certain level of syncretism also appears in *Almanac of the Dead*, relating natural elements and the spiritual world: «The local Catholic priest had done a good job of slandering the old beliefs about animal, plant, and rock spirit-beings, or what the priest had called the Devil» (Silko, 1992: 156). In addition, the symbolic dimension of Nature will also be present in this novel, uniting and separating the worlds of the Natives and the whites: «Europeans suffered a sort of blindness to the world. To them, a “rock” was just a “rock” wherever they found it, despite obvious differences in shape, density, color, or the position of the rock relative to all things around it» (Silko, 1992: 224).

This is an idea Silko has recreated based on traditional stories, songs, etc., (i.e. Native myths), and that she has revisited in several occasions, like in *The Turquoise Ledge* or in *Ceremony*:

*Then they grow away from the earth  
then they grow away from the sun  
then they grow away from the plants and animals.  
They see no life  
When they look  
they see only objects.  
The world is a dead thing for them  
the trees and rivers are not alive  
the mountains and stones are not alive.  
The deer and bear are objects<sup>3</sup>  
The see no life*

(Silko, 2006: 125; italics in the original).

In *Almanac of the Dead*, Silko tries to offer a solution to this dichotomy, making Native (or mestizo) characters discuss and reach a conclusion. That is the case of Menardo and Tacho, who try to explain the different natural disasters that affect Aztlán and Mexico by means of the spiritual world: «Menardo thought Tacho had finished on the subject, but then Tacho had blamed all the storms with landslides and floods, all the earthquakes and erupting volcanoes, on the angry spirits of the earth fed up with the blood of the poor» (Silko, 1992: 337). As seen in this quotation, a similar explanation would have been offered in Europe in a pre-*logos* stage of cultural development, so in the age of myth, prior to Thales of Miletus (ca. 624/623-ca. 548/545 BC), who coined the term «cosmos», narrowly linked to the notion of «myth», as seen above.

This done, I will now focus on Silko's most recent production, comprising the titles *Gardens in the Dunes* and *The Turquoise Ledge*. To begin with, it is necessary to state that, although these books belong to different genres (novel and memoir), both present shared characteristics in terms of approaching Nature and what that means to the «mythical» conception of diverse Native nations. For instance, one of these examples can be clearly appreciated in the quasi-naturalistic approach to certain natural elements, even including their Latin names (minerals and seeds in this case)<sup>4</sup>. Besides, both texts also offer quite a similar approach to the always

<sup>3</sup> Also seen later on in the novel with a very graphic example: «Like the first time in science class, when the teacher brought in a tubful of dead frogs, bloated with formaldehyde, and the Navajos all left the room [...]» (Silko, 1992: 181).

<sup>4</sup> We only have to pay attention to the almost scientific description of amaranth and turquoise: «The deep sand held precious moisture from runoff that nurtured the plants; along the sandstone

complicated relationship between traditional stories and legends and contemporary culture.

The story narrated in *Gardens in the Dunes* brings together many different literary and extra-literary issues. Located in late 19<sup>th</sup> century Arizona and California, it displays the story of two sisters forcibly separated after a period at an Indian boarding school. Due to this circumstance, the two of them live completely different lives, being received Indigo in a European-American family of academicians (interestingly enough, Hattie, the foster mother of Indigo is an expert in ancient Christian texts, having confronted Harvard Divinity School for her approaches to Gnostic mythology, while Edward, her husband, is a botanist aiming to gather seeds from around the world) and married Sister Salt to a former African American slave involved in the mineral rush of the Southwest<sup>5</sup>. Stylistically, *Gardens in the Dunes* follows the trends developed in the United States and Europe during the turn of the century, displaying a Modernist-like aesthetic that encompasses all the novel. Elements as characteristic of American Modernism as the travel to Europe, the expatriate (Aunt Bronwyn or Laura)<sup>6</sup>, or the intellectual as main character are present, as A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff states: «One of the major themes in the novel is Europeans' and Euro-Americans' unending desire to renovate and desire in order to introduce something new, which they replace with something even newer» (Ruoff, 2007: 12). Colleen Anna Irwin has also reflected on the phenomenon: «[...] Momaday and Silko's Modernist experimentations elevated them to the status of celebrities around whom a Romantic "Cult of the Author"»

---

cliffs above the dunes, dampness seeped out of cracks in the cliff. Amaranth grew profusely at the foot of the dunes. When there was nothing else to eat, there was amaranth [...]» (Silko, 2010: 14); «Turquoise doesn't originate deep in the Earth as many precious minerals and gems do. It forms when certain chemical reactions take place during the weathering of surface minerals. Water is a necessary component of the formation of turquoise – no wonder indigenous people of the deserts connected turquoise with water and rain – it wasn't just the color of blue or green – turquoise meant water had been there» (Silko, 2010: 6).

<sup>5</sup> An also affected by Native storytelling through his mother: «At night in their cabin, Dahlia loved to tell the stories she heard as a girl about the Red Stick people who adopted the escaped African slaves. Even before the Indians ever saw an African, the old Red Stick dreamers described them and said they had powerful medicine that the people here could use» (Silko, 2000: 217).

<sup>6</sup> Owner the latter of a magnificent garden (Silko, 2000: 184-185).

Meanwhile, the former, living in England, also explains to Indigo (and to Hattie and Edward) how the relation of spirituality (i.e. myth) and Earth was not exclusive of the Natives: «Aunt Bronwyn sat back on the coach seat, her blue eyes shining with enthusiasm as she pointed out the site of the old town. The Romans built over the old Celtic settlement near three thermal springs, sacred to the ancient Celtic god Sulis. On gravel terraces of an ancient floodplain, hot springwater bubbled on the surface with medicinal and magical properties. The Romans, always wary of offending powerful local deities, prudently named their town Aquae Sulis. But the Romans could not permit Sulis to rule supreme any longer, so they built a temple with a great pool over the springs, dedicated to Sulis and to Minerva as well» (Silko, 2000: 234). See also her ideas about toads (Silko, 2000: 241) or healing stones (Silko, 2000: 251).

could grow» (Irwin, 2009: 32). Of all the elements that have been mentioned, perhaps that of the journey to Europe deserves a special attention. As known, Native Americans have a special connection with Earth, with their native earth (their native soil)<sup>7</sup>, something also explored by Silko in *Almanac of the Dead*, both with the Barefoot Hopi's opinions (Silko, 1992: 625) and with Judge Arne's sentences, linking Native myths with the sense of belonging to the earth: «Mexicans and Indians grew connected to a place; they would not leave Tucson even alter all of Arizona's groundwater was polluted or pumped dry» (Silko, 1992: 651). What is exposed in *Gardens in the Dunes*, however, is quite opposite, for we have a desert, Sand Lizard Native (Indigo), travelling voluntarily to Europe with Edward and Hattie. At the end of «Part Four», this is expressed as a knightly quest, as an initiatory voyage:

Now she really was far from home. It was too late to jump from the ship. She was crossing the same ocean that the Messiah crossed long ago on his way to Jerusalem. After they tried to kill him, he returned over the dark moving water; Indigo had seen him herself that night as he blessed all the dancers. She took heart because the Messiah and his followers visited the east and returned; she would too (Silko, 2000: 197).

She is linking the ideas of belonging to the earth and mysticism. Her separation, in a quest related to Nature (collecting seeds) is ciphered in spiritual terms: Indigo will not be a tourist but a pilgrim<sup>8</sup>. Annette Van Dyke (Van Dyke, 2007: 178-179) also disserts on the symbolical importance of this journey, explaining how the Euro-centrism of the voyage does not only affect Indigo (Native), but also Hattie (Euro-American) is affected, seeing the light of her new life that she will pursue after returning to California.

In terms of its relationship with the myth, *Gardens in the Dunes* is a continuous debate about the aforementioned (and controversial) concept of syncretism, for both Christianity (the Messiah, but also Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, one of the key elements of mestizo mythology in the Americas) and traditional Native practices (e.g. the Ghost-dance) play a determinant role (Regier, 2005: 141). Nuestra

---

<sup>7</sup> As expressed by Silko at the end of her short story (included in *Storyteller*) «Lullaby»: «The earth is your mother, / she holds you. / The sky is your father, / he protects you. / Sleep, / sleep. / Rainbow is your sister, / she loves you. / The winds are your brothers, / they sing to you. / Sleep, / sleep. / We are together always / We are together always / There never was a time / when this / was not so» (Silko, 2012: 48).

<sup>8</sup> Silko will again link the ideas of pilgrimage and divine seeds in *The Turquoise Ledge*: «In times of drought the people of San Pablito made a pilgrimage to a cave in the mountains three days' distance from their town, bringing a small handmade foldout book of amate paper to ask for rain. Sr. Garcia Tellez wrote the words in the rain book by hand, in Spanish; facing each page of text were paper cutout fingers also made of ochre and brown amate paper. The figures represent "dioses" or spirit beings, mostly cultivated plants, who also plead for rain» (Silko, 2010: 246).

Señora commands the Natives to buy rifles to start their revolt (Silko, 2000: 354), linking *Gardens in the Dunes* to *Almanac of the Dead* and the Chiapas revolution, «“We are the army to retake tribal land. Our army is only one of many all over the earth quietly preparing. The ancestors’ spirits speak in dreams”» (Silko, 1992: 518). Actually, this last novel also explains why the Natives can meet Nuestra Señora: «European descendants on American soil anxiously purchased indigenous cures for their dark nights of the soul on the continents where Christianity had repeatedly violated its own canons, and only the Indians could still see the Blessed Virgin among the December roses, her skin color and clothing Native American, not European» (Silko, 1992: 478).

Native spirituality (and organization systems) lies in a constant relation and dependance with the Earth, having this been expressed in several legends, songs, etc. James Mooney, writing in the historical period when the novel is set, clearly expressed this in his work *The Ghost Dance and Wounded Knee* (1896), when dealing with concepts such as regeneration from the Earth after death, something also explored by Indigo in the novel: «Indigo looked up at the stars that were the road of the dead to the spirit world. She thought she could detect faint movement on the path of stars» (Silko, 2000: 27). The mythical significance of the stars also works for linking *Gardens in the Dunes* to *Storyteller*. Towards the end of the novel, it is said that «[...] Grandma Fleet said the stars were related to us humans. The twins agreed; at Laguna they’d heard stories about the North Star, who acted as a spy for Estoyehmuut, Arrow Boy, the time his wife, Kochininako, Yellow Woman, run off the Buffalo Man» (Silko, 2000: 417). Yellow Woman is dedicated a whole short story in *Storyteller* (Silko, 2012: 52-60).

In consequence, the theme of «myth and Nature» can be developed in a triangle whose sides would be the philological labor of Hattie, who truly wants to understand the myth, the chrematistic approach of Edward and Candy, who want to obtain wealth and reputation —«They’d be just the orchid to win over the public» (Silko, 2000: 371)— out of Nature<sup>9</sup>, and Indigo and Sister Salt, who truly understand Nature through myth. Gardens, both in Hattie and Edward’s house and at the boarding school, represent the impossibility of obtaining a certain conclusion from this problematic relation: «The garden holds the keys to our wholeness, wherever it happens [...]» (Robins, 2007: 52).

The last scenes of the novel are especially illustrative in terms of gathering myth and Nature-related concepts. In them, the reader witnesses the culmination of

---

<sup>9</sup> Even with risks to their lives and honor, as exposed in Edwards’s expedition to Brazil or his imprisonment after visiting Corsica to find *Citrus medica*. In the first of these moments, it is also interesting to see how Silko places the Pará Natives as the holders of the secrets of Nature: «The air was filled with a delicious perfume, but in all the overshadowing greenery no source was visible. The Indians knew exactly where to take the canoes in the branching estuaries: they knew where to find the *Cattleya violacea* by its fragrance» (Silko, 2000: 135).

several topics that have been announced along the plot, like the presence of Messiah, the reunion of the sisters, or the «reverse colonization» of Hattie. All this explodes in the Ghost Dance (also announced) that takes place in Needles, in which several Native nations gather. Two crucial scenes develop during this Ghost Dance. The first of them is linked to Native «traditional mythology», with the presence of the buffalo (and other iconic animals) and the dancers:

I saw my slain sister, Buffalo.  
I saw my slain brother, Condor.  
Don't cry, they told me.  
Don't cry.

A dancer sank to her knees moaning, then lay flat to embrace the ground; her companions pulled her shawl up to keep her warm while she visited with her dear ones. They stepped over her and the others who fell to the ground twitching and babbling, and kept dancing as the starry bridge of the Milky Way arched over them (Silko, 2000: 467).

This fragment recovers the reference to Turtle Island explained by Christopher B. Teuton when introducing Cherokee cosmology. After this, Christian mythology appears, with a last reference to the Messiah: «Now the Messiah and his followers were near, prepared to come bless the dancers on the last night. She held on to the twins' hands even tighter to keep her balance on the pulsating earth» (Silko, 2000: 467). The syncretism is complete. It is interesting to see how, only after the Ghost dance is performed, the Messiah can manifest, and how a pulsating earth is his symbol.

Finally, I will focus on Marmon Silko's memoir *The Turquoise ledge*. Here, the author narrates her recent life next to the Tucson Mountains, at the edge of the city. There, the life in contact with the desert, the canyons inhabited by Natives for millennia, and the local flora and fauna shape one of the most interesting *oeuvres* published by the Laguna-Pueblo writer. All in all, she is currently living in Anasazi, the ancestral Pueblo territory, and so she describes it, as Aby Warburg had done more than a century before (and Manuel Pino more recently), focusing on very similar elements: «When I think of the Pueblo people, I think of sandstone — sandstone rain-water cisterns, and sandstone cliff houses; sandstone was the preferred building material at Chaco Canyon and at Mesa Verde» (Silko, 2010: 17).

This memoir, besides presenting the most recent and relevant aspects of Silko's life in Tucson, also works as a mirror in which all her ancestral knowledge (from orality and research) is displayed to the public. By analyzing these pills, the reader appreciates already mentioned ideas, such as the separation between the modern human and the mythic notions of the Natives:

The old folks used to admonish us to leave things as they are, not to disturb the natural world or her creatures because this would disrupt and endanger everything, including us humans. The hummah-hah stories from long ago related what was done the wrong way and what calamity to the humans followed (Silko, 2010: 69).

However, Silko recognizes that not all hope is lost, for there are still members of the community (even non-Natives) who can understand and communicate with Nature through myth, such as one Mrs. Cooper (Silko, 2010: 27), a teacher. The formation this lady offered aimed modern, Western knowledge and traditional procedures. According to Silko, Cooper was one of the triggering factors (along with the elders in her family) to start her devotion for storytelling:

Soon after the school began, she assigned our class to take the week's spelling list and use each of the words on the list at least once in a story we had to make up. I can still remember how delighted I was with the assignment. I loved to make up stories to tell my younger sisters and cousins (Silko, 2010: 27).

This fragment is a perfect example of the crossroads Silko has witnessed in her lifetime: from ancestral way of life at Laguna to the modern world in a big American city such as Tucson.

The spirit of the natural world has extensively been explored in previously discussed works, so it is not strange to find it here again. Through her descriptions, the reader can also take the pulse of the ecosystems she is visiting, e.g. the yearly cycles: «January is the month the birds and animals give birth and raise their young ahead of the brutal summer heat» (Silko, 2010: 206). This spirit is present in some key elements such as snake, as expressed in *Gardens in the Dunes*:

[...] Laura described the remnants of snake devotion still found in rural villages of the Black and Adriatic Seas. There, people believed black or green snakes bore guardian spirits who protected their cattle and their homes. In her travels, Laura saw ornamental snakes carved to decorate the roofs and windows for protection. Great good fortune came to anyone who met a big white snake wearing a crown; the crowned snake was the sister of the waterbird goddess, owner and guardian of life water and life milk (Silko, 2000: 297-298).

The snake, as a symbolic spirit-animal, is also explored in *Almanac of the Dead* (Silko, 1992: 762) and, again, in the memoir: «The Cherokees revered snakes before Christianity arrived. So my mother taught me to respect but not to fear snakes» (Silko, 2010: 37). Although the problematic notions of myth and belief that have been displayed above, Silko here makes an effort to bring together traditions that,

initially, seem dissimilar, as previously mentioned. Thus, the concept of syncretism comes again to the discussion, for Mediterranean-Indo-European «myths» coalesce with Native American «mythical narrations». Again, Silko falls in this exercise of bringing together distant traditions when explaining the origins of writing:

I recalled reading that the Chinese got their written language from sacred stones from a mountain somewhere. The «writings» or natural marks on the stones gave the Chinese the idea of a system of marks and drawings that would send messages. I imagined them poring over the stones with the markings or «writings» certain these were messages from the supernatural world, interpreting each mark, each figure before they copied the marks and kept the stones themselves as a reference once the message of the stone was deciphered. The turquoise stone I found read thus: a flying bird, a rain cloud over Africa (Silko, 2010: 161-162).

America and China are united through the notion of «mythical» marks on rocks, through the divine gift of writing. To this reflection, we can incorporate the *Books of Thot* in ancient Egypt, enhancing this supernatural approach to something as human as writing, through the natural element rocks are.

In conclusion, as I have tried to prove in the previous pages, Leslie Marmon Silko's literature has turned from a leading voice of the Native American Renaissance to an active myth-maker, recovering and reframing what had been given to her into the new shape of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. The notion of the myth arises to give a double explanation to this complicated process, if the notions exposed by Warburg and Eliade were not complicated enough. On one hand, Native American myths explain how the present situation was already dreamt and prophesized by the elders; on the other, through Silko's re-visitation of Laguna-Pueblo (and others) mythological systems, the modern European-American, leaving his blindness apart, can find a solution for many modern-day problems (decreasing resources, pollution, social confrontation, loss of faith...). The solution is imprisoned in stories, only waiting to be set free (i.e. understood) and applied. «My writing is a gift to the Earth», Silko assessed. Her writing, though, is also a gift to those who populate the earth. Her writing, palimpsest of traditions, formats, and ideas, hides the essence of salvation. Only turning to myth, this salvation can be achieved, for the solution (i.e. the salvation) lies hidden in the secret language only an initiated can know. Silko, via her narrations, gives the reader a path of clues to acquire that initiation, like Hesiod (or Ovid) did in the ancient world.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

*BOOK OF MORMON* (1973): Herald Pub House, Salt Lake City, UT.

- ELIADE, M. (1987): *The Sacred and the Profane. The Nature of Religion*, Harcourt, San Diego, CA.
- IRWIN, C. A. (2009): *Indigenized Modernism: Native Worldviews and the Modernist Novel*, Unpublished PhD Dissertation, U of Alberta.
- JASKOSKI, H. (1998): *Leslie Marmon Silko: A Study of the Short Fiction*, Twayne Publishers, Boston, MA.
- MOONEY, J. (1973): *The Ghost Dance Religion and Wounded Knee*, Dover, Mineola, NY.
- NELSON, R. M. (2005): «Leslie Marmon Silko: Storyteller», in J. Porter and K. M. Roemer (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Native American Literature*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 245-256.
- PINO, M. (1990): «Reminiscing with Pa-Pa (Grandmother) About Ka-tse-ma», in G. Hobson (ed.), *The Remembered Earth. An Anthology of Contemporary Native American Literature*, University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, NM, pp. 298-299.
- REGIER, A. M. (2005): «Revolutionary Enunciatory Spaces: Ghost Dancing, Transatlantic Travel, and Modernist Arson in *Gardens in the Dunes*», *MFS. Modern Fiction Studies*, 51, 1, pp. 134-157.
- (2012): «Leslie Marmon Silko: Mapping Radical Histories and Futures», in E. D. Hoffman (ed.), *American Indians and Popular Culture*, Praeger, Westport, CT, pp. 19-32.
- ROBINS, B. K. (2007): «Tips for Nurturing the Home Garden», in L. Coltelli (ed.), *Reading Leslie Marmon Silko: Critical Perspectives through Gardens in the Dunes*, Edizione Plus. Pisa University Press, Pisa, pp. 37-56.
- RUOFF, A. L. V. B. (2007): «Leslie Marmon Silko's *Gardens in the Dunes*: Contact Zones and Cross Currents», in L. Coltelli (ed.), *Reading Leslie Marmon Silko: Critical Perspectives through Gardens in the Dunes*, Edizione Plus. Pisa University Press, Pisa, pp. 7-20.
- SALYER, G. (1997): *Leslie Marmon Silko*, Twayne Publishers, Boston, MA.
- SEYERSTED, P. (1980): *Leslie Marmon Silko*, Boise State University, Boise, ID.
- SILKO, L. M. (1974): *Laguna Woman*, Greenfield Review, Greenfield, NY.
- (1992): *Almanac of the Dead*, Penguin, London.
- (2000): *Gardens in the Dunes*, Simon & Schuster, New York, NY.
- (2006): *Ceremony*, Penguin, London.
- (2010): *The Turquoise Ledge*, Penguin, London.
- (2012): *Storyteller*, Penguin, London.
- TEUTON, C. B. (2012): *Cherokee Stories of the Turtle Island Liars' Club*, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, NC.

- UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS (2013): *Guide to Research in Native American Religions*. Online: [The Internet Archive](#).
- VANDYKE, A. (2007): «Walking in Balance: The European-Based Spiritual Journey in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Gardens in the Dunes*», in L. Coltelli (ed.), *Reading Leslie Marmon Silko: Critical Perspectives through Gardens in the Dunes*, Edizione Plus. Pisa University Press, Pisa, pp. 177-183.
- WARBURG, A. (2018): *Bilder aus dem Gebiet del Pueblo-Indianer in Nord-Amerika: Vorträge un Fotografien*, De Gruyter, Berlin.
- WRIGHT, A. (ed.) (1986): *The Delicacy and Strength of Lace: Letters Between Leslie Marmon Silko and James Wright*, Graywolf, Minneapolis, MN.