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Pincus, Matthew

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## Bewitched Policies of Resistance: America's Legacy of Unknown Soldiers in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Storyteller*

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MATTHEW PINCUS  
UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA AT LAFAYETTE

### Abstract

*Storyteller* (1981) by Leslie Marmon Silko is a unique hybridized text of Laguna Myths centered on topics of Laguna Pueblo Citizens, and more generally Indigenous Southwestern Americans. “Tony’s Story,” “Uncle Tony’s Goat,” and “A Geronimo Story” are three tales where characters are agents of political resistance against injustices enacted by the American Military and law enforcement over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Each story subverts the dominant “white” narrative of American politics and history through use of traditional Laguna Pueblo values linked to the inseparable geographical terrain they call home. In “Tony’s Story,” the protagonist and his friend enact a revenge narrative on a racist cop who abuses his power, thus commenting on modern-day police brutality. A cop is killed, and rain at the end of the story acts as an emergent symbol of freedom creating an age of peace against the violence that has patrolled its borders. “Uncle Tony’s Goat,” about a billy goat who refuses to be penned in, acts as a metaphorical bridge to “A Geronimo Story,” where historical Apache chief, Geronimo, also a mythical folk legend in American culture, escapes and evades the American military. Geronimo was originally captured and imprisoned by American colonial militaristic forces, but in Silko’s reimagining he is an elusive figure only known to the cavalry by name. In these stories, characters become free to interact and commune with the land, and sites of invasion and theft from the indigenous become sites of reverence and remembrance.

### Keywords

Silko, Laguna-Pueblo, soldiers, New Mexico

### Introduction: “The Story Must Be Told As It Is.”

Laguna Pueblo writer Leslie Marmon Silko has been notable in the American Southwest literary landscape over the last forty years for her novels *Ceremony* (1977) and *Almanac of the Dead* (1991). *Storyteller*, her second work, was published in 1981 as a hybrid text of short stories, nonfiction anecdotes, and poetic renderings of Laguna myths. In the poem “I always called her Aunt Susie,” Silko speaks of “all of us remembering what we have heard together—/ that creates the whole story / the long story of a people” (6). These stories are a collection of memories she gathers from her family. More specifically, from her grandma A’mooh and Aunt Susie, in a continuance of her efforts to preserve Laguna Pueblo culture for her community. Silko says in her introduction to *Storyteller*, “This exchange of information through stories about what had just happened was a primary factor in the

survival of human species in a world in which nearly all creatures were either bigger, stronger, or faster than human beings” (xviii). The three stories I wish to focus on—“Tony’s Story,” “Uncle Tony’s Goat,” and “A Geronimo Story”—have characters who are scouts, veterans, and/or relatives of American military service members. In my reading, Silko’s narrators act as agents of political resistance against what she sees as injustices enacted against Southwestern Native Americans by both the US military and law enforcement members over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The protagonists of her stories act as harbingers of truth who must tell a story from their Indigenous perspective, or die for these convictions. As the woman in “Storyteller” says to her attorney from jail, after leading an insidious storekeeper onto the ice, “I will not change the story, not even to escape this place and go home. I intended that he die. The story must be told as it is” (29-30). This explicit reference from the title story foreshadows how others will tell stories from within the perspective of their own representations of truth. All too often, these come in the form of geographical markers of place. In an essay titled “Interior and Exterior Landscapes: The Pueblo Migration Stories,” Silko discusses the interrelationship between animals, land, and how these are intrinsically linked to the vitality of their citizens. She explains, “Not until they could find a viable relationship to the terrain—the physical landscape they found themselves in—could they *emerge*” (38). The survival of the Laguna Pueblo culture is thus linked to the landscape, and to the creatures that reside there. Animals, changes in weather, specific relationships with the land, or descriptions of particular topographies act as a means for protagonists to not only be agents of political resistance, but also to reclaim a sense of justice against America’s doctrine of Manifest Destiny that de facto implements a genocidal behavior against their Indigenous cultures and societies.<sup>11</sup> In consequence, *Storyteller* is a text that works against the dominant *white* narrative of American politics and history to reform and revise the injustices done to Southwestern Indigenous nations by means of stories that use traditional Laguna Pueblo values, as well as by their inseparable connection to the geographical terrain that they call home.

Native American soldiers of the American military are often examples of individuals who wished to protect their communities and families from the discriminatory and violent practices of U.S. political policy and the military enforcement of the colonization of the Southwest. Gerald Vizenor observes, “Natives served in the military to ensure their survival, however ironic, and as warriors to ‘obtain security, honor, prestige, and wealth, and to enact revenge on enemies’” (224). Scholars have looked at these stories through the lens of America’s imperial colonized violence to Native American peoples, but have not seen how Silko uses these characters to express Laguna Pueblo myths and worldviews. In an interview with Thomas Irmer and Matthias Schmidt she says, “That is one of the

strengths of the narrative tradition: it oversimplifies to break things apart, to fragment, but the truth remains comprehensible, in beautiful patterns, in a beautiful way” (161). I argue that in *Storyteller*, Silko revises and reforms the dominant *white* narrative through her representation of vulnerable Native American citizens that work for American governmental institutions, and yet express their identity and their solidarity with their peoples by behaving within Laguna Pueblo ethical codes and values. These stress, among other things, the importance of the New Mexico landscape, as well as respect and reverence for the creatures of their homeland. There is a dynamic sense of compassion that endures among inter- and intra-tribal members, displayed by way of a reenactment of their oral narratives in the stories in question, evoking a Native language that has been passed down through generations which ensures the continuing existence of their communities.

### **A Geronimo Story: “That’s a long way to do for deer hunting”**

Silko’s revisionist tale of the nineteenth century marks an emphasis on inter-tribal and intercommunal relations of compassion that is based, as previously argued, on an awareness and adherence to their homeland. The story is prefaced by an anecdote of her own Grandmother A’mooh telling a story about Navajos who attempted to steal a herd of sheep. Laguna Pueblo subjects caught up with these Navajos, who moved slowly, and they asked them why they were doing so. The Navajos responded by saying they were hungry. Grandma A’mooh, by way of Silko’s narrative, then states, “So the Lagunas told them the next time they needed food to come ask for it instead of stealing it and the Laguna people would be happy to give them something” (203). This leads to a tradition or festival carried from the late nineteenth into the early and mid-twentieth century of a Laguna Feast commemorating the event on September 19. On the following page is a picture of the storyteller Grandma A’mooh, adding a documentary element of witnessing from the perspective of a Laguna Pueblo woman. Silko is an heir to this oral storytelling tradition, but wishes to convey the ethics involved in generating a behavioral civilized tradition of exchange and joint celebration that markedly contrasts with the lack of solidarity exhibited by dominant patriarchal Anglo-American society.

“A Geronimo Story” connects to the preceding anecdote through the Laguna narrator Andy, who saddles and rides with his Uncle Siteye, a Laguna scout for the U.S. military attempting to capture the elusive Geronimo. Andy’s horse was given to him in a trade with Navajos, in which they gave his mother’s “new sewing machine with silver engraved trimming and a wooden case” (206). Siteye takes the place of Grandma A’mooh as the narrative voice in this tale. Andy says of his uncle around a fire in the evening after a full day’s riding, “It was beautiful to hear Siteye talk; his words were careful and

thoughtful, but they followed each other smoothly to tell a good story. He would pause to let you get a feeling for the words; and even silence was alive in his stories” (209). The narrator Andy, much like the Laguna writer Silko, crafts and revises tales to reflect their community’s values by deploying oral narratives with pauses and tonal rhythm, just as written fiction can record multiple stylistic variations and symbolism to evoke Native languages.

Major Littlecock, Siteye’s commanding officer, tells Natives they must sleep in the horse’s stables because civilian quarters house the women, and it would be against Army regulations to allow them in the same space. This is a racist way of expressing his fear for masculinist violence on the part of Native American citizens. Earlier it was revealed that Captain Pratt (higher in rank than the Scouts but lower than Littlecock) is a white man married to a Laguna woman, and is called by other officers the pejorative term of “Squaw Man.” Siteye both resists and subverts Major Littlecock’s racism by exploiting his fear through his Native language: “He looked intently at the Major’s face and spoke to him in Laguna. ‘You are the one who has a desire for horses at night, Major, you sleep with them’” (213). His satirical logic is a humorous comment on Littlecock’s fear of Siteye. The implication that other scouts were secretly sleeping, assaulting, or raping white women is about as logical as believing Littlecock desires to be assaulted by a horse. The suggestion also may also entail not only that Littlecock’s repressed fear is hiding his craving for bestiality but also that this may be a metonymic representation of the perception of white military subjects by Lagunas.

As indicated in the introduction, Laguna scouts such as Siteye and his friend Sousea are Native American members of the military that wish to shield themselves, their families, and their communities, from genocidal violence by professing their patriotism through their service. However, there is a fluid celerity between American patriotism, and a persistent expression of tribal and Native identity. For instance, the famed Apache chief Geronimo was instilled in the American imaginary through his forced participation in “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show,” and his march in Teddy Roosevelt’s second Inaugural parade in 1905. He violently rebelled against the American military in Arizona and evaded them in Northwestern Mexico until he was captured and imprisoned at Fort Sill, Oklahoma from 1894 until his death in 1909.<sup>2</sup> In Silko’s story, Geronimo is never found, and Littlecock’s suspicion of Geronimo’s campsite turns out to be a Mexican’s sheep camp. Siteye’s expertise shows how foolish Littlecock’s speculative mind is through his bull-headed drive to capture Geronimo without any knowledge of the landscape. Earlier in the story, Siteye expresses a conflicting view of the army’s objective when he states, “We’re hunting people. With deer I can say, ‘Well, I guess I’ll go to Pie Town and hunt deer,’ and I can probably find some around here. But with people you

must say, ‘I want to find these people—I wonder where they might be’” (212). Hunting deer denotes a relationship with the land, whereas capturing and imprisoning other Natives is a tragic consequence of Anglo-American imperial violence. Expressed earlier in the tale is a quiet, but affirmed hope that Geronimo will escape the army’s grasp. Laguna people show deference for a rebelling Apache chief, just as the anecdote by Grandma A’mooh shows precedence for harmonious intertribal communication and exchange with Navajos. Reciprocity emerges as one of the most cherished ethical values of Native American knowledges. It is also a principle articulated by words of power and survival, about how language is an instrument for both communal experience, and a symbolic communion with nature, of which their homeland is a big part.

Siteye and Andy do not have to witness, or aid the American military in the arrest and capture of Natives at the suspected campsite, but rather the moment becomes one of precious rarity with the geographic terrain. Silko observes in an essay, “Hunting stories carefully described key landmarks and locations of fresh water” (32). Andy finding a stream, drinking from it, and describing the water as “Precious and rare,” (215) shows the respect he carries not only for his horse, but also for the land itself. Further, the spring he finds carries implications of Geronimo still running free through the land as well as acting (as it will in “Tony’s Story”). It is a symbol of emerging consciousness and awareness for the young man coming into his own identity. Cynthia Carsten explains, “Central to the Pueblo cosmos are human beings who are responsible for cultivating harmonious mental and psychological states through the performance of traditional ritual or ceremony” (109). Andy becomes aware of his linked identity with the Laguna Pueblo culture and tradition through the conscious emergence of drinking from a spring on a deer hunt, which produces a balance, and recognition of mental and ethical faculties, but also of belongingness within a specific ethnoscape.

The deer hunt allows Andy to recognize Siteye’s love and respect for the land as an individual value of an extended family member. It also acts as a rebuttal towards the nineteenth century American military’s desire to kill and imprison Natives, taking territory they have occupied for centuries by violent force through conquest and genocidal actions. The end of the text shows this protest by saying, “We sat there for a long time remembering the way, the beauty of our journey. Then Siteye shook his head gently. ‘You know,’ he said, ‘that was a long way to go for deer hunting’” (223). Andy’s uncle consciously denies the American military’s original objective in sending them to a sheep camp outside Pie Town as scouts to complete a mission. Their time was not spent completing the vindictive and malicious goals of colonial militarism, but rather used to undertake a traditional Laguna Pueblo ceremony of hunting deer. Krumholz notes in a similar statement, “Finally, spirituality redefines

power. Insofar as power is located not in technological, economic, or military domination but in the spiritual realm, the ‘dominant’ society does not, in fact, dominate” (73). Although both a deer hunt and Andy’s experience with the spring may not be wholly spiritual, such actions act as a redirection of power, where the scouts and the absent “Geronimo” (a dignified portrait of the man in old age follows the story) obtain a quiet victory over the violent domination enacted by nineteenth-century American militarism. Andy and Siteye venture home with their rewards from the hunt while the American military returns to the fort with nothing to show for their efforts despite their limitless supply of men and arms.

### **Tony’s Story: “They Sometimes Take on Strange Forms”**

The poem leading into “Tony’s Story” is titled “Poem for Myself and Mei: *Concerning Abortion*” dated April 1973 is about Silko and her friend Mei-Mei Berssenbrugge, a notable American poet exercising this right.<sup>3</sup> The end of the poem describes the death of butterflies against their car, “and the iridescent wings / flutter and cling / all the way home” (115). Even though there is death (reminiscent of the end of “Tony’s Story”), this is reflected through the iridescence, or the perspective from which one catches the angle of light.

“Tony’s Story” itself is a morally convoluted tale of a boy named Antonio (Tony) Sousea who is friends with Leon, a Native American soldier who has just come back from war. A police officer terrorizes Leon throughout the story, and eventually Tony kills the cop with Leon’s gun. Silko, after telling a story of her own trauma and relation to a friend and writer, begins a tale of another’s trauma. Tony Sousea is almost certainly a descendant of Sousea, the scout in “A Geronimo Story.” Leon, a man who has come back from the Vietnam War, is saved by a friend whose ancestor was also a service member for America in the late nineteenth century. Further, the tale puts the Western reader in a moral quandary by pitting the treatment of a veteran against the murder of a police officer. Silko’s narrative suggests that just as women have a right to autonomous choice over their own bodies, Native Americans also have a right not to be harassed or assaulted by police within or outside their tribal lands.

Silko’s main theme is to subvert the dominant *white* narrative of American politics and history through showing the injustices of police violence, and officers’ belief in the racial inferiority of Native Americans. Their actions undercut any notion of ‘Serving and Protecting’ the citizens of the Native American community.<sup>4</sup> Another layer of symbolism in the text is the characterization of the police officer through Tony’s witnessing of his encounter with Leon, and his dream later that evening. At a

carnival where Tony first sees Leon after he has come back from service abroad, the cop punches Leon in the face. After having to drive him an hour or so to the hospital in Albuquerque, his friends inquire, “What happened, what did Leon say to the cop?” and I told them how we were just standing there, ready to buy hamburgers—we’d never ever seen him before” (117). Tony dreams of the man later that evening holding a bone at him, and places “whiteness” as a color that both references Anglo-American myths and beliefs as well as malevolent abuses of power the cop hopes to commit.<sup>5</sup> He recalls of the dream, “He didn’t have a human face—only little, round, white-rimmed eyes on a black ceremonial mask” (117). Later, this dream is linked to a memory from Tony’s childhood as stories are continually recalled and sifted, just as the text of *Storyteller* is recalled and sifted from Silko’s memory. Tony states, “But it was like the time when I was very little and my parents warned me not to look into the masked dancers’ eyes because they would grab me, and my eye would not stop” (118). The dancer in relation to the cop is not only a harmful figure but also one who possesses an ability to hypnotize and curse a Native spirit or soul. The cop enforces the border of the Laguna Pueblo reservation, and in two instances stops Tony and Leon outside the reservation. He also says to them “I don’t like smart guys, Indian. It’s because of you bastards that I’m here. They transferred me here because of Indians. They thought there wouldn’t be as many for me here. But I find them” (119). There is the insinuation that the man has committed injustices or perpetrated violence against Native American citizens before, and has been demoted or reassigned because of such actions. He still seeks to enact injustice and violence against Natives out of a vendetta, which makes this officer a discriminatory sociopath.

The third and final time Tony and Leon encounter the cop he does threaten them directly with violence. He attempts to pull them over, but Leon does not comply in a timely enough manner, so the officer pursues them. When they stop, Tony describes the scene in the way, “The big cop was standing in front of the pickup, facing Leon. ‘You made your mistake, Indian. I’m going to beat the shit out of you.’ He raised the billy club slowly. ‘I like to beat Indians with this’” (120). The story slowly explicates the man’s true racist nature or rather his pathological desire for violence, as well as his perception of Native Americans as an inferior race whose bodies he can use as an outlet, given his position of authority and his membership in the white settler colonial assemblage. The conspicuous subversion in “Tony’s Story” of course is the murder of the officer at Tony’s hands, the seemingly peaceful protagonist compared to the U.S. veteran Leon. In addition, the death of the cop by gunshot subverts the foretold conclusion of Tony and Leon being beaten senseless by the officer, or worse, being murdered. Further, before they are pulled over, Tony focuses on the natural landscape



explaining, “We were in the narrow canyon with pale sandstone close on either side—the canyon that ended with a spring where willows and grass and tiny blue flowers grow” (120). In turn, there is a reclamation and a recognition of the tranquil, aesthetic beauty of the land after the cop is killed, and the curse is lifted. And in keeping with this notion of the eradication of the curse, Tony and Leon, after the former has killed the officer, sets fire to his vehicle to both cleanse the stain of breaking a taboo, while also destroying the evidence of the alleged crime.

Rain comes at the end of the story, linking their story to the spring before they are pulled over. As Silko says in the aforementioned essay, “The spring also functions on a spiritual level, recalling the original Emergence Place and linking the people and spring water to all other people and to that moment when the Pueblo people become aware of themselves as they are even now” (36). Tony, conscious of both this scenario and the environment linked to his home and community, makes an individual and spiritual choice to rid them of a hateful, violent man guarding its borders. As Paula Gunn Allen notes of the Keres people, closely linked to Laguna Pueblo culture and tradition, “The rain comes only to peaceful people, or so the Keres say. As a result of this belief, the Keres abhor violence or hostility” (18). Although the act Tony commits is a violent one, he rids the community of the malevolent, vicious dominant “white” authority figure who besides being a constant threat of violence, represents colonial oppression at its worst, by virtue of the authority figure attempting to deny agency to colonized and racialized subjects living in their own land. Thus, this exercise of agency brings peace to the lives of many Laguna Pueblo citizens who venture outside of the reservation for any number of necessities or leisure activities. The action itself is rewarded symbolically and cosmologically by the land. The image of the rain connotes the revitalization of their ethnospace, in keeping with the spring as a symbol of social and spiritual renewal.

### **Uncle Tony’s Goat: “We got milk and meat from them.”**

“Uncle Tony’s Goat” is prefaced by an anecdote about the writer Simon J. Ortiz. Silko once again begins this tale, like “A Geronimo Story,” with a compassionate reminiscence of correspondence and connection. She says, “I owe a great deal to him for his encouragement when I was first beginning to write” (161). The story itself is about an unnamed child narrator (presumably Ortiz) who angers a billy goat that then runs off from Uncle Tony’s farm. The animal, through the narrative, is a figure of resistance exercising a will not to be penned in, and essentially asserts the value of the homeland as one that cannot be legitimated by capitalist means. Rather, as in all these stories, it is represented as a shared spiritual terrain of connection and conversance among ethical relationships.

The narrative placed in the middle of the story looks back to “Tony’s Story,” conspicuously through the name; Uncle Tony may be the same character, now older. There is a reference to this moment in the story of the younger Tony, “He caught us shooting rocks at an old wrecked car; its windows were all busted anyway, but he took the slingshot away” (163). Thus, there is the possibility that Uncle Tony possesses a distant memory of the car he burned a policeman in, or it could be the same car since the body was most likely charred and turned to ash. Uncle Tony, like Grandma A’mooh and Andy before him, shows a deep reverence to the landscape’s animals through the respect expressed towards his livestock. His nephew observes, “My uncle was careful to see that all the goats were treated properly; the worst scolding my older sister ever got was when my mother caught her and some of her friends chasing the newborn kids” (172). The animals are to be treated humanely with kindness. As Silko says in an essay about the Yaqui nation titled “The People and the Land are Inseparable,” “This is where their power as a culture lies; with this shared consciousness of being part of a living community that continues on and on, beyond the death of one or even of many, that continues on the riverbanks of the Santa Cruz after the mountains have been left behind” (90). When Silko refers to “a living community,” she is not just referencing the human life, but also—as all Indigenous cultures do globally—to the animal and plant life, and even the natural “objects” such as mountains or springs, that exist in the environment and ecosystem. Uncle Tony’s belief evidences Native American understanding that all creatures, whether human or animal, exist on a similar, if not parallel status of equality.

The billy goat, like Geronimo in the succeeding story, is a figure of defiant resistance that acts as a playful political metaphor for American nineteenth-century colonial militarism. The child protagonist attempts to put the goats out into the pasture from their pen, and is trampled by the billy goat. He both witnesses and remembers, “Uncle Tony carried me to the house; his face was stiff with anger and I remembered what he’d always told us about animals; they won’t bother you unless you bother them first” (174). What Uncle Tony doesn’t know is that the child and his friends shot bow and arrows at the goats on the pasture earlier in the story. They were not trying to kill the goats or even harm them, but the billy goat saw the action as a threat. He refused to be handled or cared for by what he considered malicious or violent figures who at one time or another might try to kill him again. When he comes home from school the morning after being trampled, his uncle says, “Jumped out of the pen somehow. I saw him just as he went over the hill beyond the river. He stopped at the top of the hill and he looked back this way” (175). The goat carries a spiritual, supernatural-like quality, similar to Geronimo’s ability to elusively evade the American military.

He somehow escaped the barbed wire pen, and although Uncle Tony futilely attempts to recapture him, he is always in his eyesight a mile or two out of reach. Silko scholar Lynn Domina suggests, “As Uncle Tony pursues him, the goat taunts him, pausing if Uncle Tony gets too far behind, remaining consistently visible. Yet at the end of the story, Uncle Tony is more entertained than annoyed by his frustrated attempts to capture the goat” (59). Unlike the American military, who will never rest until they have captured and imprisoned Geronimo for both defying and skirting their forces, the protagonist’s uncle admires the billy goat’s escape as well as his speed. In the end, he recognizes the goat’s exercise of agency, and is happy to respect the goat’s wishes to become a free, wild creature.

The end of the story is followed by a photograph that shows a communicable exchange between the natural landscape, and the Laguna Pueblo community. It pictures Silko’s sisters holding the antlers of a buck in the back of a pickup truck after her father has come back from hunting season. The narrator of “Uncle Tony’s Story” discerns, “The goats were valuable. We got milk and meat from them” (163). Uncle Tony possesses deference to creatures who he believes share land with him and does not wish to see his livestock as legitimated property. There is a communal, and intergenerational acceptance of the landscape’s region as a compassionate collective that both takes and gives. The goat is taken away from Uncle Tony, who chooses not to enforce his property ownership of the animal, and allows it to run away. There is a spiritual justice at the end of the piece as a deer is given to Silko’s family with two smiling children standing by the immense, gracious animal.

### **Conclusion: “To Destroy His Enemy With Words”**

*Storyteller* is one of Silko’s lesser-known texts. It adheres to the notion that Laguna languages and oral storytelling are not only central to the preservation and existence of Laguna citizens and their community, but are a means of conveying and preserving epistemologies derived from their immediate ecology and their interaction with the spiritual world. Further, the emphasis on oral narrativity emphasizes how languages preserve communal relationships and their systems of belief, a critical role in the preservation of threatened epistemologies.

Needless to say, there is also a connection to the larger nation in that Laguna soldiers and scouts in the American military have fought in the service of a nation that massacred and enacted genocide upon their ancestors. Silko’s project is to heal, to reconcile, and to provide a subversive outlet in these stories for soldiers and their ancestors, from within a counternarrative that empowers Native American subjects, their beliefs, and their worldviews, rather than succumb to the dominant cultural

narrative of Manifest Destiny often accompanied by jingoistic whiteness. These beliefs involve a sacred deference and respect for the land as well as all living beings that constitute a specific environmental homeland—including their “natural” expressions such as rivers, mountains, or vegetation—and an intergenerational and inter-tribal compassion among families and communities, as it is continuously told and retold through oral storytelling. In “A Geronimo Story” Siteye says, “Anybody can act violently—there is nothing to it; but not every person is able to destroy his enemy with words” (214). Silko uses language, and further translates English into her Native language through adhering to Laguna beliefs and values, just as soldiers, veterans, and their descendants enact dissent against the dominant white settler narrative from within, while professing to protect their view of patriotism. Although violence enacted by the American military conquered the Southwest, dominant cultural narratives can change worldviews as well as social and political mores. These three stories are narratives that not only act as civil disobedience in Thoreau’s famous terms, but an insurgent voice that will make the case for American reparations as well as for progressive ideologies that may finally benefit Native American citizens.

My intention was to dissect stories and to reveal how Silko shows Southwestern—specifically Laguna—Native American citizens interact and connect with a nation that committed genocide against their ancestors. Silko’s own essays and interviews, Laguna cultural critic Paula Gunn Allen, along with scholars Lynn Domina, Linda Krumholz, and Cynthia Carsten provided lenses through which Laguna beliefs and values could be elucidated more transparently and fully. Further, Dee Brown’s *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* helped to envision the late 19<sup>th</sup> century from the retrospect of Native American citizenry.

Language and respect or reverence for the land is central to “A Geronimo Story,” in which Siteye uses his Laguna language to insult Major Littlecock for ordering Native scouts to sleep in the stables. There is a reverence toward animals in “Uncle Tony’s Story,” in which the title character is the stubborn billy goat who runs off into the wilderness. “Tony’s Story” recalls “A Geronimo Story” through a descendant of the scout Sousea and his courageous decision to not only protect his friend and American veteran Leon, but also the larger Laguna community from the police officer seen as an evil spirit or a curse.

Scholarly research and writing on Leslie Marmon Silko has focused on her breakthrough novel *Ceremony* and her longer, more esteemed work *Almanac of the Dead*. Future research could seek to interpret poetry and photographs in her work that links to the stories; these are unusual hybrids made up of various mediums and genres of writing. Silko’s more recent novel *Garden in the Dunes* (1999), her

other hybrid collection *Rain* (1997), along with her memoir *The Turquoise Ledge* (2010), could also be other avenues for further study.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> In Silko's essay, "Auntie Kie Talks about U.S. Presidents and U.S. Indian Policy" she provides this concise analysis of Andrew Jackson, founder of Manifest Destiny: "The court [U.S. Supreme court] and the chief justice, John Marshall, held that the state of Georgia could *not* force Cherokee Indians off their lands. The president of the United States, Andrew Jackson, openly defied the court, saying, 'It's the court's decision, let the court enforce it'" (83).

<sup>2</sup> Dee Brown in his landmark text *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* perceives of newspapers around present day Arizona, "As for Geronimo, they made a special demon of him, inventing atrocity stories by the dozens and calling on vigilantes to hang him if the government did not" (407-8). Although Brown's account of the yellow press at the time may be over-exaggerated, he fled in May because of being shackled once before at San Carlos where he did not wish to receive the same treatment again. His flight constituted, according to Brown's argument, "The very word 'Geronimo' became a cry for blood" (408). Again, Brown's comments carry strong condemnations of Indigenous Apaches by American society and their press backed by a powerful colonial military, but certainly their actions after capturing him in late 1886 speak for themselves. The historian accurately says, "Martine and Kayitah, who led Lieutenant Gatewood to Geronimo's hiding place, did not receive the ten ponies promised them for their mission; instead they were shipped to imprisonment in Florida" (412). Geronimo himself was also imprisoned for a short period at Fort Marion in Florida, moved to Mount Vernon Barracks in Mobile, Alabama, and Fort Sill in Oklahoma. He was a tourist attraction at the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis and also rode in Theodore Roosevelt's inaugural parade in 1905 (Utley, 253-58). As Silko in her essay titled, "Auntie Kie Talks about U.S. Presidents and U.S. Indian Policy" recounts, "People who criticized Roosevelt for inviting so-called savage murderers to ride in the inaugural parade were told that the president wished to 'give the people a good show'" (83). The spectacle of Geronimo in this instance is contrary to the slippery figure in Silko's story the two scouts are expected to find.

<sup>3</sup> *Roe v. Wade*, the case that gave women in America the right to an abortion, was decided in January of 1973.

<sup>4</sup> According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, and National Center for Health Statistics (CDC and NCHS), although Native Americans are .8 percent of the American population, they make up 1.9 percent of police killings, which would make them the most likely ethnicity to be profiled and targeted by law enforcement (Vicens). Per the Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, law enforcement officers killed 4,351 people between 1999 and 2011, which would mean there were 82 Native Americans killed during this period. In 2014 alone, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) reported 1,029 people were killed by police (Syrmopoulos), and through *The Guardian's* special project called "The Counted," there have been 1,146 people killed by police in 2015.

It is also extremely difficult, if not impossible to get accurate data on the number of individuals shot by police, or involved in police fatalities over a given year. The numbers reported by the FBI are voluntarily given to them by local police departments. Further, as *The Guardian* on its masthead about "The Counted" says, "Between 2005 and 2012 just 1,100 police departments – a fraction of America's 18,000 police agencies – reported a 'justifiable homicide' to the FBI." The numbers given in this essay may be much higher, especially regarding Native Americans who, for their population size (5.2 million) and percentage of the whole U.S. population (2%), are killed much more frequently. Sociologists David Falcone and Edward Wells astutely argue through their own research,

For American Indian/Alaskan Native respondents on the NCVS, 101 out of 1000 were victims of violent crimes (including assaults, rapes, and robberies), while the corresponding rates were 41 per 1000 persons for white respondents, 50 per 1000 persons for black respondents, and 22 per 1000 persons for respondents classified as Asian (200).

<sup>5</sup> This is noted by Barbara Perry's study titled, "Nobody Trusts Them! Under- and Over-Policing in Native American Communities." There were 278 Native Americans interviewed in seven different states (including New Mexico) on over a dozen reservations. One striking quote says, "Reports of police misconduct toward Native Americans – running the continuum from negligence to extreme forms of violence—were consistent across the interviews, regardless of location" (437). This type of behavior is not just a local or state-specific problem, but rather a national issue that ranges from Minnesota to New Mexico.

Further, as a special report on the Albuquerque Police Department from the *New Yorker* suggests in a comment from an officer on encountering or dealing with suspects, "'We're taught to almost dehumanize them,' she said. 'It just got to the point where it's, like, they're a piece of shit. We don't care if they raped a baby or were speeding in traffic—everybody's a piece of shit'" (Aviv n.p.). The Laguna Pueblo reservation is less than an hour's drive east to Albuquerque, and the hospital ER Tony takes Leon to is within the city. Professor David Correia of American studies at University of New Mexico is quoted in the same *New Yorker* report arguing, "'There's this myth here of tri-cultural harmony—indigenous people, Mexican-Americans, and Anglos—but this precarious arrangement is built on a long history of violence against Spanish-speaking and indigenous people that still plays out'" (Aviv n.p.). There is a violent history that continues to a

present-day tension, or undercurrent existing in the state of New Mexico because of these racial and dehumanizing measures seeking to exploit, not cherish the residents and their landscape.