

Proceedings of the one-day workshop on
**'THE BODY IN THE ARTISTIC AND CULTURAL
PRODUCTIONS: BETWEEN AESTHETICS AND
SIGNIFICATION'**



Actes de la journée d'études et de réflexions sur
**'LE CORPS DANS LES PRODUCTIONS ARTISTIQUES ET
CULTURELLES : ENTRE ESTHÉTIQUE ET
SIGNIFICATION'**

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Klohinlwélé KONÉ

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- BERGER Gaston, 1967, *L'homme moderne et son éducation*, Paris, PUF.
- DIAGNE Souleymane Bachir, 2003, « Islam et philosophie. Leçons d'une rencontre », Diogène, 202, p. 145-151.
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THE NATIVE AMERICAN'S REPRESENTATION OF THE BODY IN LESLIE SILKO'S *CEREMONY*

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Before the arrival of White Americans, the Native Americans had their own canon of beauty and their representation of the body. The body was viewed as sacred and connected with nature. Nevertheless, with the colonization, the hair, the scarification, the skin color, the figure, the clothing, etc. have undergone tremendous changes. In our work, we will use as corpus Leslie Silko's *Ceremony* as a way to get insight into the Native Americans' representation of the body. To achieve that, we will use the tools of postmodernism to analyse how this representation of the body have gradually changed.

Keywords: Colonization, canon, tradition, Native Americans, body



Avant l'arrivée des Américains blancs, les Amérindiens avaient leur propre canon de beauté et leur représentation du corps. Le corps était considéré comme sacré et lié à la nature. Néanmoins, avec la colonisation, les cheveux, la scarification, la couleur de la peau, la silhouette, les vêtements, etc. ont subi d'énormes changements. Dans cet article, nous utiliserons comme corpus *Ceremony* de Leslie Silko afin d'analyser la représentation du corps par les Amérindiens. Pour y parvenir, nous utiliserons les outils du postmodernisme pour analyser comment cette représentation du corps a évolué au fil du temps.

Mots clés: Colonisation, canon, tradition, amérindiens, corps

Introduction

What is a beautiful woman or a handsome man for you? The canon of beauty is not the same for everybody because people come from different social, ethnic and social background. Most of the time our culture influences our aesthetic canons or criteria. About beauty, the Cambridge dictionary gives this definition: "The quality of being pleasant, especially to watch, or someone or something that gives a lot of pleasure, especially when looking at it" (Cambridge University Dictionary, 2021, online). It stands out from this definition that each one has his own representation of a beautiful body because what looks "pleasant, especially to watch" for someone may look ugly for someone else. The appreciation of beauty is then subjective and related to the canon of beauty that each one has internalized.

The complexion, the hair, the skin, the shape, the dress, the makeup, etc. are all parts of the canon of beauty. In this respect, what can be said about Native Americans? What representation of the body did they have before colonization? Have their representation of body experienced a change? What does Leslie Marmon Silko think about it? In 1948 Leslie Marmon Silko was born in Albuquerque, New Mexico, of Pueblo, Laguna, Mexican, and white descent. She is then a Native American. Leslie Marmon Silko published her first novel, *Ceremony* in 1977. It explains how vital storytelling is to the Pueblo culture and how White culture has made many attempts to destroy these stories as well as their ceremonies. The novel also describes how Native American's traditional of the body has undergone changes after colonization. We will strive these changes by making references to postmodernism theories

I. The Native American's traditional conception of the body

For most Native Americans the body is considered as sacred. According to their tradition, the Mother Earth has given birth to all human beings. Consequently, the body must be respected, honored. Just as some physical traits can be found between a mother and his child, they establish some similarities between Mother Earth and the human body. About this connection between human body and the Mother Earth, Leslie Marmon Silko testifies:

“For most Native Americans the body is considered as sacred. According to their tradition, the Mother Earth has given birth to all human beings. ”

Thus Native American literature, like the life and culture of which it is a part, is centuries old, more than thirty thousand years perhaps, and its roots lie deep in the land. The ancient Pueblo people called the earth the Mother Creator of all things in this world; and along with all life on earth, we originate from its depths. So long as the human consciousness remains within the hills and canyons, the plants, and the sky, the term landscape, as it is in the English language, is misleading. 'A portion of territory the eye can comprehend in a single view' assumes the viewer is somehow outside or separate from the territory he or she surveys. The land, the sky, and all that is within them- the landscape- includes human beings. Survival depended upon harmony and cooperation among the animate and the less animate things. (Leslie M. Silko, 1994, pp. 19; 35-4)

According to Leslie Marmon Silko, it is impossible to analyze the Native American's body without making the connection with the Mother Earth, Creator is a mistake and it disrupts the harmony and corporation that has always existed between Native Americans and the Nature. Many references are found about this synchronization between the Mother Earth and the human body. For example, describing Helen Jean,

a Native American woman, the narrator of *Ceremony* observes: “She was an Apache or a Ute. Her face was angular, and something about her nose and eye reminded him of a hawk” (p. 157)

The narrator uses here this pathetic fallacy in order to highlight Helen Jean’s beauty and picture her as a Native American goddess. In this metaphoric description, Helen Jean’s face is pictured just as the shape of an angular land, the shape of the Mother’s Earth. The connection with nature is reinforced with the reference with a hawk, a predatory bird which is worshiped by Native Americans. Just like the son or the daughter resembles the mother, Leslie Silko who is also a Native American finds that similarities exists between Helen’s human body and the Mother Earth. As a matter of fact, the narrator of *Ceremony* acknowledges: “He dreamed he made love with her there. He felt the warm sand on his toes and knees; he felt her body, and it was as warm as the sand, and he couldn’t feel where her body ended and the sand began. He woke up and she was gone” (p. 222). Here, Mother Earth pictured by the sand, is personified. She is given a human body which has the same temperature like Tayo’s human body. Mother Earth is so pictured with realism that it sounds like a romance and as if Tayo has fallen in love with Mother Earth, as if possessed by her spirit.

The body of the Native American men and women is then viewed as sacred, full of mystery and each element of the body is connected to the invisible world. It is believed that when this link with nature and Mother Earth is disrupted, the individual’s body gets sick. To restore that health a ceremony is made. The body is at the core of this healing ceremony. During ceremonies, the skin and the rest of the body is painted with various colors. Picturing Betonie, during a healing ceremony, the narrator admits:

He undressed
he painted his body
the whorls of flesh
the soles of the feet
the palms of his hands
the top of his head
He wore feathers
on each side of his head. (p. 47)

Betonie is pictured here naked and with paints all over his body. The anaphora “the” is used to emphasize the fact that no part of the body is left aside. One can wonder why. Phoebe Dufrene gives us a clue:

Art is indispensable to ritual, and ritual is the Native American concept of the whole life worship, and worship as indistinct from living (Highwater, 1976). (...) Not only is art highly valued for its magical power, but there is a mystical basis for aesthetic judgment among Aboriginal people. If the art is well made, it is “good spirit” rather than beautiful (Ibid, 1976). When the art of any culture reaches its highest

levels, it establishes states of harmony between antagonistic forces within the confines of its symbolic world. (...) Disturbances of the capacity to make useful personal symbols in art can be a serious indication of pathology (Landgarten, 1975). Traditional Native healers or shamans draw upon a vast body of symbolism passed down through the centuries. These images are stored in the memories of traditional healers and passed from generation to generation. (...) This special and sacred awareness of the universe is codified in song and chant, poetry and tale, carving and painting. (Phoebe Dufrene, 1991, pp. 122-124)

For Phoebe Dufrene, the painting of the body is part of Native American's healing ceremony because for them art is "highly valued for its magical power." The inspiration to paint drawings on the body is believed to come from the invisible world, the nature and the Mother Earth. Being unable to do so is a signal that something is wrong. "Myths, prayers, songs, chants, sand paintings, music, etc., are then used to return the patient symbolically to the source of tribal energy" (*ibid.*, p.123) and connect him with the power of the Mother Earth. There is then a connection between the human body and the spiritual world and the physical world resembles the invisible world. Through painting on the physical body, the beauty of the invisible world is highlighted and praised. This detail mentioned by Leslie Silko is relevant because it gives us insight in the fact originally, Native American's conception of the body is influenced by their beliefs, customs and tradition. Fernando Gonçalves notices: "In keeping with this belief system, the two forms basic to Native American literature are the ceremony and the myth. The ceremony is the ritual enactment of a specialized perception of a cosmic relationship, while the myth is a prose record of that relationship." (Fernando Gonçalves, p. 38)

For, Fernando Gonçalves, the purpose of a ceremony is to bring the individual with both his physical body and mind together and restore his isolated personality to conscious harmony with the universe. The healing ceremony is a rite of passage, a necessary step to restore or bring back the individual to the natural world. Through the myths, prayers, songs, chants, sand paintings, music, etc., the beauty of the human body is praised as well as the one nature. The world of the human being and the world of nature and spirit are essentially reflections of each other in the shaman's view of the cosmos. The sick ones are taught that Nature is beautiful and worthy of respect and worship. The reference to the healing ceremony in Native American narrative often serves this purpose.

Sometimes, during healing ceremonies, drawings of body shapes are made on the ground, to invoke the spirit of the Mother Earth. The narrator observes:

He [Tayo] looked for an imprint of her feet or the outline that the cloth of her skirt made in the sand. (...) He felt shaky inside, what if there were no traces of her, no lines of sand pressed by her body, no delicate track of her (...). The imprints were there. He traced his fingers lightly along them. He had not dreamed her; she was there as certainly as the sparrows had been there, leaving spindly scratches in the mud. "I'm over

there”, she said. Her voice came from the east side of the narrow canyon.
(p. 222)

Through the antithesis, the narrator “He felt shaky inside, what if there were no traces of her no lines of sand pressed by her body, no delicate track of her (...)” and “the imprints were there” highlights the fact that the drawings and paintings that Native Americans make on their body and by the body on the ground are not always understandable by a cartesian mind. In the mere sand, Tayo is able to see the shape of the body of a woman, the Mother Earth wearing a “skirt made in the sand” which an ordinary man will not see. He is able to hear her voice saying: “I’m over there”. Through this imagery, the narrator shows how realistic is the interconnection between the Native American’s body and the Mother Earth.

But what was the meaning of the feathers that Betonie wore during the healing ceremony? Were there mere ornament? Do only men wear them? , Peter W. Doss Crow provides an answer to these questions:

The use of feathers to signify war deeds and status was common in most tribes of North America Indians. Eagle feathers were most coveted for these headdresses and were full of war symbolism. (...) Ermine skin and buffalo horn embellishments added to headdresses served to evoke courage and strength. Feathered war bonnets were a military decoration developed by the Plains Indians. Since the eagle was considered by the Indian as the greatest and most powerful of all birds, the finest headdresses were made out of its feathers. Each feather signified deeds earned through bravery in battle. Worn only on special occasions, the headdress’ real value was in its power to protect the wearer. In some tribes, men wore an artificial roach made of porcupine quills attached to the man’s own hair. (Peter W. Doss Crow, 2009, p. 4)

For Peter W. Doss Crow, feathers are not for Native American mere ornaments. They are signs of authority and status. Since the eagle is considered to be the most powerful of all birds, only powerful and courageous men such as warriors in the Native American tribe can wear eagle feathers. It is a military decoration that denotes power and also gives mystical power to the body.” It is believed that drawing elements of nature on the body and bearing some of them such as feathers connect with the body with a “good spirit”, the spirit of the Mother Earth which has given to all life and who can also restore back the sick body. In *Ceremony*, the wearing of feathers during the healing ceremony by Betonie denotes that in his community he has a special status. He is invested of a power and authority and communicates with mysterious forces and powerful higher powers.

Apart from headdresses, the face can also be decorated and beautify the body. In fact, the eyes which is part of the human face and the hair are elements of the canon of Native American women’s beauty. In *Ceremony*, this fact is highlighted. The narrator completes Helen Jean physical description: “Tayo could see the lines at the

corners of her eyes and a slight curve of flesh under her chin. Her hair was short and curled tight” (p. 156).

The narrator describes Helen Jean’s hair as “short and curled tight” and having “the lines at the corners of her eyes”. Apparently, these lines draw Tayo’s attention and he finds it beautiful. For Tayo, a beautiful woman has dark eyes. He confesses in an aside: “I always wished I had dark eyes like other people. When they look at me they remember things that happened. My Mother”. (p. 99) We get some clues here about the reason why Tayo is seduced by women with dark eyes. In his psyche, Tayo has been educated that way. Since his childhood, the only woman to whom he has been most closed to, has dark eyes. It has built up, then its representation of the woman’s beautiful body. Seeing a woman with dark eyes, remind him of the most beautiful woman for him, his first love, his dear mother.

About Tayo’s representation of the complexion and the face of the beautiful woman, the narrator notices: “He saw her face in the light that came suddenly and bright; she was crying. (...) She looked at him. The skin on her face was darker where she had smeared the tears with the back of her hand” (p. 231). In this excerpt, the narrator shows that for Tayo, a beautiful Native American woman must have a skin dark in complexion. But this representation is it only the one of Tayo? Hilary N answers:

Having darker skin tones and being visibly recognizable as an Indigenous person can also be associated with a sense of cultural pride, connection to ancestors, and belonging. An Indigenous person with light skin may (or may not) have insecurities about their sense of self and may be targeted by others for not looking “Indian enough.” Having a skin tone considered darker than that presumed typical for Native Americans may also lead to insecurities and/or stigma for not looking “Indian enough.” Clearly, skin color is vested with powerful, complex, and often contradictory meanings and associations. (Hilary, 2015, pp. 6-7)

For Hilary, Native Americans do not associate the black color with curse. They rather view it “with a sense of cultural pride, connection to ancestors, and belonging”. Those of their community with a dark skin are not considered as outcast, not looking Native American enough because they have a skin color that make them resemble more to the White Americans, the colonizer. Tayo’s representation of the beautiful woman as having a dark face and skin is not then only his own. Before the White American’s arrival, many Native Americans did not have any complex of inferiority about having a skin and a face dark in complexion.

The long hair has been also considered for long as an important feature of the Native American canon of beauty. The narrator describes the hair of a woman that Robert and Tayo found under the bridge: “The woman’s hair was tangled in hairpins which had been pulled loose and hung around her head like ornaments. Her head weaved from side to side as she squinted and tried to focus on Tayo up above her”.

(p. 114) The woman pictured here as beautiful has long hair. It is so long that it bears hairpins to tangle it in. In the simile, the Native American's long hair is compared to ornaments, because it is considered as a beautiful part of the body which adds beauty to the woman physical appearance. In addition, to be long, Rebecca Gelles highlights that the beautiful Native American women's hair is also black and thick: "There are three major variables when it comes to hair appearance: color, length, and texture. Initially, it might not seem that the first of these factors would be very influential in India, since the natural hair color of all or almost all Indians is the same—black." (Rebecca Gelles, 2011, p. 15)

Most often, Native American are born with long black hair. The long black hair is then loved, considered as valuable and beautiful. For Rebecca Gelles, Native American women do not worry too much about coloring their hair with dye, because in the traditional Native American society, a long thick and dark hair is a natural thing, a divine gift from Mother Earth. The narrator brings out this point by observing; "Her long hair was curled and piled up on her head in long ringlets, the style of some past time. She did not look old or young to him then; she was like the rain and the winds; age had no relation to her". (p. 98) In the simile: "she was like the rain and the winds;" the beauty of the woman's body and hair is compared to the beauty of nature, of the Mother Earth symbolized by natural elements such as rain and winds. "She did not look old or young to him then" is a pun making reference not to a particular Native American woman, but to the traditional Native American woman generally speaking. Whether old or young, for the omniscient narrator, what makes the Native American beautiful, is not her age, but how natural is her beauty.

For Native Americans, dresses also enhance the beauty of the person wearing it and gives information about his rank. It is a cultural mark of identification to a tribe. Mary L. Kwas acknowledges:

Protection, however, is only one facet of the purpose of clothing. Far more interesting is the way that clothing serves as an expression of culture. For example, clothing can signify social status or position. Think about the kinds of clothes a king or chief might wear: beautiful fabrics made of rare and costly materials, bright colors and designs, or even special items like a headdress or crown or elaborate robe. Different occupations also may be signaled by different kinds of clothing. (...). Clothing can be made from all sorts of materials, including animal skins, plant fibers and leaves, feathers, and the more modern materials of metal, plastic, and a variety of synthetics. Some of the earliest clothing was probably made from animal skins. The Indians would also dye the hides with various colors—yellow, red. (Mary L. Kwas, 1996, pp. 1-2)

As stated, according to Mary L. Kwas, the Native American's clothing are not made only to cover the naked body. It is the mirror of the individual social status and position. A Native American king or chief of tribe for example, will wear more beautiful fabrics made of rare and costly materials, having bright colors and designs, or an elaborate robe. Before colonization, the Native American's clothing was not

made from synthetically fibers. They were made of natural materials such as “animal skins, plant fibers and leaves, feathers”. Metal and plastics are more modern materials brought by the colonization. Referring to those old-fashioned dresses that were viewed as beautiful, the narrator notices: “She spread her blue silk shawl open and laid her things in the middle. (...) When he went to get them as he took them for her, the blouses and skirts were like bright wings of butterfly settled on branches“. (p. 234) In this excerpt, we find a juxtaposition or the enumeration of dress styles worn by Native Women. The narrator mentions a “silk shawl”, “the blouses” and “skirts”. Interestingly, materials used to make these dresses are natural. For example the silk is produced by an animal. The narrator uses the simile “the blouses and skirts were like bright wings of butterfly settled on branches” to highlight the colorfulness and beauty of those natural dresses.

Native American men don't care too much about their physical appearance. For example, men do not care too much about shaving the beard and cutting the hair because they don't think that it is what matters in order to have a beautiful body. This is for example the case of Betonie, the medicine man of the Native American community in *Ceremony*:

He looked at his clothes: the old mocassins with splayed-out elkhide soles, the leather stained dark with mud and grease; the gray wool trousers were baggy and worn thin at the knees, and the old man's elbows made brown points through the sleeves of the blue cotton work shirt. He looked at his face. The cheekbones were like the wings of a hawk soaring away from his broad nose; he wore a drooping thick mustache; the hairs were steel gray. Then Tayo looked at his eyes. They were hazel like his own. (p. 119)

“the Native American's clothing are not made only to cover the naked body. It is the mirror of the individual social status and position.”

What strikes in the physical description of Betonie is that the extended metaphor used in this passage establishes a connection between parts of his body with animals and trees. In the simile “The cheekbones were like the wings of a hawk”, Betonie's cheekbones is compared to the one of a hawk in order to suggest that despite his old age he is powerful and can walk fast in the bush like a bird. The narrator insinuates here that a handsome man is not weak. He is strong and courageous. Betonie's eyes, like Tayo's own are brown like the hazel. His mustache is thick which suggests that it is unkempt. This idea is emphasized in the description of the hairs: “the hairs were steel gray.” This hyperbole points at the fact that the hair has not been cut for such a long time that it seems as resistant as steel. The clothing is “worn thin at the knees” and the shoe are “are old mocassins with splayed-out elkhide soles, the leather stained dark with mud and grease.” The clothes worn by traditional Native American men like Betonie were not made of artificial material. Before the industrialization and the

colonization, they wore shirt and trousers that they made by using natural fabrics such as cotton. Men were not concerned about buying new clothes for the narrator notices that “the gray wool trousers were baggy and worn thin at the knees, and the old man’s elbows made brown points through the sleeves of the blue cotton work shirt” Even the shoes are also made of natural materials like leather and elkhide for the narrator says: “He looked at his clothes: the old mocassins with splayed-out elkhide soles, the leather stained dark with mud and grease”. The points stressed here again is that what is natural is beautiful. Nature makes beautiful and beautifies. To make beautiful clothes, shoes and ornament that will beautify the body, there is no need to destroy and pollute the nature. Betonie is pictured with careless physical body in order to stress the fact that what the beauty of the physical body is enhanced by the spiritual, moral and inner beauty.

Both men and women wear mocassins made with natural fabrics. What makes the difference between a mocassin made for men and the one made for women was only the cuffs cutting. Rick Hill testifies:

Moccasins are among the articles of clothing most closely associated with Aboriginal peoples. (...) In the past, mocassin styles were as varied as the Indian peoples that made them, each having its characteristic ornamentation and designs. Moccasins were adopted by Europeans in the 17th century and are still widely worn today. They are footwear perfectly adapted to their environment: flexible, comfortable and practical. There used to be a rule of thumb that if the cuffs were one piece that wrapped around the back of the mocassin, those were made for women. If the cuffs are cut into two separate flaps, it would indicate that they were men’s moccasins. However, that rule is not always adhered to. Men’s pair of straight moccasins, constructed by gathering leather onto apron with oval toe and oval seat. The leather used is most likely a deer hide buckskin (...). (Rick Hill and Roxanne Sky, 2012, pp. 8-12)

From what has been discussed so far, we can say that the Native American had their own representation of the body before the colonization. For them, the body is not a mere artifact. It is sacred, originating from the invisible word and connected with it. What is significant in fact is not the material prosperity or anything what is material, even if it is useful for life. To be really beautiful, the physical beauty must match with the inner beauty. Leslie Marmon Silko explains:

In everyday Pueblo life, not much attention was paid to one’s physical appearance or clothing. Ceremonial clothing was quite elaborate but was used only for the sacred dances. The traditional Pueblo societies were communal and strictly egalitarian, which means that no matter how well or how poorly one might have dressed, there was no social ladder to fall from. All food and other resources were strictly shared so that no one person or group had more than another. I mention social status because it seems to me that most of the definitions of beauty in contemporary

Western culture are really codes for determining social status. (...) In the old-time Pueblo world, beauty was manifested in behavior and in one's relationships with other living beings. Beauty was as much a feeling of harmony as it was a visual, aural, or sensual effect. The whole person had to be beautiful, not just the face or the body; faces and bodies could not be separated from hearts and souls. (Leslie Marmon Silko, 1998, pp. 11-12)

For Leslie Marmon Silko, the fact that the Native Americans did not put much stress in the physical appearance or clothing in order to qualify someone as beautiful or not because before the colonization, they used to live in a communal and strictly egalitarian society which has shaped their representation of the body and made them think that that no matter how well or how poorly one might have dressed or look like one was beautiful and accepted as long as he has a good behavior and live in harmony with others in the community.

Nerveless, with colonization and the clash with a new culture, has the Native American's representation of the body really changed? If yes, to which extent?

2. The change in the Native American's representation of body

During the 19th century, Native Americans were invaded by White Americans in search of new territories and natural resources. They fought a war to overcome Native Americans' resistance and conquer their land. The narrator tells us:

You know, at one time when my great-grandfather was young, Navajos lived in all these hills". He pointed to the hills and ridges south of tracks where the white people had built their houses. He nodded at the arroyo cut by the river. "They had little farms along the river. When the railroaders came and the white people began to build their towns, the Navajos had to move". (p. 118)

In this apostrophe, the narrator is appealing to the reader's feelings as he points at what he views as an injustice: the expropriation of Native Americans' lands by force. In this pathos, he subtly calls the reader not to forget this episode of the Native American's history. For him if colonization has not brought as good, railways, modern houses, it has also brought a lot of harms. Fernando Gonçalves acknowledges:

Manifest destiny, like all ideological power, is sanctioned by institutions and works to systematically eradicate American Indian and American Indian culture while simultaneously encouraging European settlement of North America. An example of such laws and legislation include the Indian Removal Act of 1830 (Cave, 2003; Fenelon, Trafzer & Trafzer, 2014; Lewis, 2011; Talbot, 2006). As the name clearly states, this law created by the United States government intended to remove Indians from native lands. (...). In addition to the Dawes Act of 1887 signed by President Cleveland reinforcing the individualism of Western culture

onto the American Indians (Otis, 1973), it also resulted in additional loss of common American Indian lands to white folks who often 'bought' it in a scandalous capitalistic way. Forced migration continued into the 20th century, as the federal government's assimilation policies relocated around 160,000 American Indians from tribal reservations to urban environments throughout the 1950's (The Relocation Act of 1956). (Fernando Gonçalves, pp. 15-16)

According to Fernando Gonçalves, it is proven from an historical viewpoint that the White Americans' real objective through colonization was to remove all Native Americans from their land and to destroy their culture. Even if many were killed and those who were relocated to reservations faced harsh new conditions of life, sickness and poverty, the remove Indians from native lands was to break their attachment to the Mother Earth, their rites and tradition. In replacement, a new American culture and civilization was brought to them in urban environments. The White Americans strive to impose upon Native Americans a new representation of the world and of nature. Leslie Marmon Silko's omniscient narrator, in *Ceremony*, tells us about some of those changes:

But the fifth word had become entangled with European names: the names of the rivers, the hills, the names of the animals and plants—all of creation suddenly had two names: an Indian name and a white name, Christianity separated the people from themselves; it tried to crush the single clan name, encouraging each person to stand alone, because Jesus Christ would save only the individual soul; Jesus Christ was not like the Mother who loved and cared for them as children, as her family. (p. 68)

In this amplification, the narrator put emphasis on the fact that colonization of Native Americans has changed tremendously their identity, their culture and their civilization. The new White American religion has taught the Native Americans that they had view themselves and the World differently. This has created a confusion in their mind for Native Americans have been given both an "an Indian name and a white name". Since, the name identifies someone, the purpose of those new names is to instilled into them the fact that they former representation of themselves was not good. They were encouraged to forsake their former egalitarian way of living together and adopt and behave like White Americans, think like them, dress like them. The ridicule: "Christianity separated the people from themselves; it tried to crush the single clan name, encouraging each person to stand alone, because Jesus Christ would save only the individual soul; Jesus Christ was not like the Mother who loved and cared for them as children, as her family", the narrator makes fun of the fact that religion was used shamelessly by White Americans to teach the promote an ideology that puts stress on individualism and not love of community. The narrator highlights a paradox. White Americans say that they believe in Jesus and present him as the founder of their faith, Christianity, while at the same time, they do not show love for others and the community just as Jesus did. Fernando Gonçalves testifies:

Colonizers used religion to justify and carry out this oppression through ideology, followed by action (Smith et al., 2006). The diverging viewpoint of Western culture that categorizes spirituality within an institutionalized context of religion uses religious iconography to create an image of white cultural superiority. An example in the depiction of the previous painting, American Progression, where an Angel is clearing the land of American Indians, Bible in hand, proving Western colonizers have a God-given right to take it. While no American Indian language even had a word for “religion” (let alone institutions, dogma or commandments), American Indian spirituality encompasses a deep spiritual force culminating in a sacred way of life (rather than a belief system), and enriched by ceremonies, songs, storytelling, and poetry that forms a complex interconnected heritage with nature and the spiritual path (Smith et al., 2006). ‘(...) The 1883 Indian Religious Crimes Code formally outlawed “pagan” ceremonies under the recommendations of the Secretary of the Interior to eliminate barbaric practices including dances, feasts, traditional religious ceremonies, and the practices of Indian spiritual leaders punishable by imprisonment (Fine-Dare, 2002; Wilson, 2001). (Fernando Gonçalves, p.18-19)

According to Fernando Gonçalves, with the colonization, Native Americans have been told that “ceremonies, songs, storytelling, and poetry that forms a complex interconnected heritage with nature and the spiritual path” amounts to worship the devil. For instance, the 1883 Indian Religious Crimes Code formally outlawed those “pagan” ceremonies and made them punishable by imprisonment. Colonizers used religion to justify their deeds of oppression and convey the impression that they were sent by God, that they have backing from the invisible world. Consequently, Native Americans gradually started changing their representation of nature and the world. In the new world created for them, there was no place for Mother Earth. Some Native Americans came to believe that there was no longer any connection between their body and the invisible world. They no longer feel any connection with the invisible world and started putting more stress on physical aspects of the body just like the White Americans. Consequently, Native Americans have adopted a new canon of beauty. The narrator of *Ceremony* observes:

She was excited to see that despite the fact she was an Indian, the white man smiled at her from their cars as she walked from the bus stop in Albuquerque back to the Indian School. She smiled and waved; she looked at her own reflection in windows of houses she passed; her dress, her lipstick, her hair-it was all done perfectly, the way the teacher taught them, exactly like the white girls. (p. 68)

In this lampoon, the narrator makes fun of the unusual way the modern, educated Native American woman is concerned about her body. She seems obsessed by it because she has developed a complex of superiority. In the irony: “She smiled and waved; she looked at her own reflection in windows of houses she passed; her dress,

her lipstick, her hair-it was all done perfectly, the way the teacher taught them, exactly like the white girls.” The modern Native American woman appears like a puppet, manipulated by the White Americans in order to act as they want and make their delight. For her, the beautiful body is the one of White American top models, the white American girls. To give us a clue about the canon of beauty of the White Americans, Leslie Marmon Silko’s omniscient narrator introduces us into the shop of a station and zooms on the image of the white woman pictured on a calendar: “Above the desk, on a calendar, a smiling blond girl, in a baton twirler’s shiny blue with white boots to her knees, had her arms flung around the neck of a palomino horse. She was holding a bottle of Coca-Cola”. (p. 153)

The narrator zooms on a Coca-Cola advertisement because to make the promotion of goods and make money, the White Americans use what is beautiful from its standpoint. They points at the face of “a smiling blond girl” because the Native American body is not appealing since it is darker, not fair in complexion. What is black seems to be a curse. What enhances the shape of the physical body in this ad is not only mocassins or shoes made with natural fabrics, but “white boots to her knees”. The color white is again highlighted. With that representation of the body, the body is discriminated, loses all its humanity and becomes just a tool used to sell and make profit for the narrator says: “in a baton twirler’s shiny blue”. In this verisimilitude, the narrator makes the satire of the capitalism system which makes uses of the women’s body as if it is a magical stick made to sell goods.

For, the White American, the right body, the beautiful one is also a slim one, a mannequin like, not a fat one. The narrator makes fun of this representation of the body: “The dry skin was still stuck to his body. But the effects of the witchery of the evil thing began to leave his body” (p. 153). In this caricature, the narrator makes fun of the fact that what the White Americans consider as a beautiful body is dried and lacking corpulence. He finds this type of body too dried, sick and ugly. In fact, to keep “the perfect body shape”, some even resort to anorexia and bulimia or medical surgery. For the narrator, treating one’s body in this way is being wicked, it is witchery. In the metaphor: “But the effects of the witchery of the evil thing began to leave his body”, he expresses his eager desire that Native Americans who have been possessed by the evil way of thinking that the White Americans have instilled into them by the power of the so-called White Americans’ witchcraft called civilization will be free from it.

Strangely, most modern Native Americans women pictured in *Ceremony* who are dominated by the White American’s representation of the body are also

“Leslie Marmon Silko thinks that the White Americans’ representation of the body puts too much stress on the physical appearance and it is superficial.”

prostitutes. This is the case of Helen Jean for example who is described as riding cars with various men: “Her hair was short and curled tight, and her eyelashes were stiff with mascara; she kept reaching into her tooled leather purse between her feet for her lipstick, rubbing it back and forth until the lips were thick and red.” (p. 156) In the ridicule: “rubbing it back and forth until the lips were thick and red”, the narrator makes fun of the exaggerating way modern Native American women’s make use of cosmetics to look artificially beautiful. Helen Jean is pictured here without the traditional Native Americans long hairs, but with short hair. She tries to look more like a man than a traditional Native American woman. Her physical description speaks loud about her rejection of the traditional view of the Native American’s representation woman body. She looks artificial. Nothing on her physical body (eyelashes, lips, hair) is natural. Her name Helen Jean also doesn’t sound like a Native American name nor like a woman’s name.

Leslie Marmon Silko thinks that the White Americans’ representation of the body puts too much stress on the physical appearance and it is superficial. Though, the Native Americans, before the advent of colonization look at the body, value physical appearance, they feel physical attraction, not all that matters. Despite the arrival of colonization, some Native Americans are still attached to the traditional representation of the body for the narrator of *Ceremony* observes:

The sensitivity remained: the ability to feel what the others were feeling

“White Americans’
representation of the body puts
too much stress on the physical
appearance and it is superficial.”

in the belly and chest; words were not necessary, but the messages the people felt were confused now. When Little Sister had started drinking wine and riding in cars with white men and Mexicans, the people could not define their feeling about her. The Catholic priest shook her finger at the drunkenness and lust,

but the people felt something deeper: they were losing her, they were losing part of themselves. (...) It might have been possible if the girl had not been ashamed of herself. Shamed by what they taught her in school about the deplorable ways of the Indian people. (...) The people wanted her back. Her older sister must bring her back. For the people, it was that simple, and when they failed; the humiliation fell on all of them; what happened to the girl did not happen to her alone, it happened to all of them. (pp. 68-69)

This excerpt describes other changes that the White American civilization has brought in the habits of Native American women. The narrator mentions: “When Little Sister had started drinking wine and riding in cars with white men and Mexicans, the people could not define their feeling about her.” The euphemism “and riding in cars with white men” is used to try to cover the shame that the Native American community feel as they see Native American women who think that they

are beautiful prostituting themselves. . The semantic field of shame is also present in the expressions: “It might have been possible if the girl had not been ashamed of herself.” “Shamed by what they taught her in school about the deplorable ways of the Indian people” and “For the people, it was that simple, and when they failed; the humiliation fell on all of them; what happened to the girl did not happen to her alone, it happened to all of them”. The white American representation of the body has then killed the inner beauty, the moral values. The Native American has been Some Native American women have started viewing their body as an object that can be sold to men. This new representation of the body has created a lot of disruptions inside the Native American community and has alienated Native Americans. This idea is expressed in the metaphor “but the people felt something deeper: they were losing her, they were losing part of themselves”. Here the narrator highlights the fact that viewing the body as an object that can be sold, equals to missing the right road and being alienated. The narrator is expressing his will that the alienated Native Americans will come back to their senses and love again their natural before and their community like their ancestors and stop bringing shame to them when he says: “The people wanted her back.”

Women are not the only ones that have changed their representation of their body. Josiah is pictured as a changing man by the narrator of *Ceremony*: “He changed his shirt and put on a stiff new pair of Lewis and wiped out his fifty-dollar boots with the towel that was still damp from drying his arms and face. (...) He told Tayo to get the sharp scissors out of the Auntie’s sewing basket and he trimmed the hairs in his thin mustache” (p. 81). Josiah is dressed here like a cowboy with a “new pair of Lewis” and ‘his fifty-dollar boots “symbols of the White American civilization and capitalism. Josiah has started thinking that a real man, a powerful man must be dressed like the White American master, the cowboy because he has started developing also a complex of inferiority. Unlike Betonie described on page 6, who wears clothes and shoes made with natural fabrics and leaves is hair unkempt, Josiah has started trimming his hair because he has stopped representing his body according to the traditional Native Americans’ canon of beauty.

Today these two representations of the body can be observed inside the Native American community. While the assimilated ones who have adopted the White American’s canon of beauty strive to maintain the mannequin-like shape of body, the others try to stick to the old Native American’ representation of the body. Phoebe Dufrene also notices:

But despite the emphasis of the media on slimness, some of the traditional ideals of wide hips and large breasts are ingrained into the culture, and have not faded away. Harinder Singh, whose store sells body shapers and enhancers, notes that although many women buy thigh, hip, or stomach shapers, which are intended to compress those areas, hip and breast enhancers are also popular, especially with younger women. (Phoebe Dufrene states, pp. 20-21)

Conclusion

Finally, our analysis of the Native American's Representation of the body Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* has undergone a change over time, throughout the fiction. Before the colonization, the body was viewed by all the Native American community as sacred, the temple of the gods, the Mother Earth because it was connected with the invisible powers. Although, long hairs, mocassins, shirts, trousers made of cotton and natural fabrics were used to embellish the body, what matters to the Native American community was the inner beauty, its connection with the invisible words. The emphasis was not put too much on the physical appearance. With the advent of colonization, the Native American's canon of beauty has undergone great changes. Two trends have started been visible inside the Native American society. While some Native Americans, both men and women adhere to the White American ideology which values the slim body shape and top models, the others value the traditional representation of the body characterized by dark skin colors, long hairs, wide hips and large breasts ingrained into the Native American culture, natural enhancers of beauty and the inner beauty. Are these trends not also visible worldwide and specifically inside the Ivorian society?

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