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Audrey Goodman

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From Fugitive Poses to Visual Sovereignty : The Photo-poetics of Leslie Silko's *Storyteller* and Joy Harjo's *Crazy Brave*

Audrey Goodman

Reframing "Fugitive" Portraits

- ¹ As a child growing up in Jemez, New Mexico, Kiowa writer N. Scott Momaday often accompanied his father in his work for the Roads Department on the Navajo reservation and watched him take informal portraits of their neighbors.¹ He enjoyed hearing his father exchange greetings and jokes with people along the way and welcome all who came in their wagons to the Low Mountain Trading Post from the "immense and wild" land that surrounded them. In the essay "The Photograph" Momaday contrasts his memory of this vital community with the partial view presented in one particular image. He recalls,

One day an old Navajo crone came to our house and asked to have her picture taken. She was a gnarled old woman with gray hair and fine pronounced features. She made a wonderful subject, and I have always thought very well of the photograph that my father made of her. Every day thereafter she would come to the house and ask to see the print, and every day my father had to tell her that it had not yet come back in the mail. Having photographs processed was a slow business then in that part of the world. At last the day came when the print arrived. And when the old woman came, my father presented it to her proudly. But when she took a look at it, she was deeply disturbed, and she would have nothing to do with it. She set up such a jabber, indeed, that no one could understand her, and she left in a great huff. I have often wondered that she objected so to her likeness, for it was a true likeness, as far as I could tell. It is quite possible, I think, that she had never seen her likeness before, not even in a mirror, and that the photograph was a far cry from what she imagined herself to be. Or perhaps she saw, in a way that we

could not, that the photograph misrepresented her in some crucial respect, that in its dim, mechanical eye it had failed to see into her real being. (175)

- 2 Momaday identifies her as a “wonderful subject” and proclaims the print “a true likeness,” but both his evocation of this image and his essay raise a series of unanswered questions : Why does the woman reject “her” photograph ? What was she saying with her “jabber” ? What other knowledge does she carry in her body ? Who will tell her stories, and to whom ? In this recollection, Momaday also doesn’t address how attitudes toward photography specific to Diné culture might have influenced the old woman’s response. According to Diné and Seminole/Muscogee photographer and scholar Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie, Diné people protect their privacy and their visual identities, leaving observers to think and see what they like. “The superstition or shyness was neither explained nor elaborated on to strangers, because the ‘photographer’ would not have understood the nuances of privacy that the Diné perceived,” she explains (Tsinhnahjinnie, 2003, 41). As outsiders, Momaday and his readers can only guess at what the woman saw and how she imagined her own face and body. Although Momaday’s father may have captured a “true likeness,” this Diné woman’s “real being” eluded the photographer’s eye.

- 3 Salish and Kootenai/French-Cree/Shoshone painter Jaune Quick-to-See Smith claims, “Portraits are deceptive because of what they don’t tell. Captured in one moment of time, we can contemplate what the subject is doing or thinking, or even guess about their lives, but the difficulty with these Indian portraits is that often what they show us is just not the way it was” (62). In “Family Album,” an essay published in *Partial Recall* edited by Lucy Lippard, Smith reflects on three different photographs of her great aunt Emma Magee, who published a now-obscure memoir of her life on the Flathead reservation in the Rocky Mountain West between 1866 and 1950, as well as on one photograph of her father Arthur Albert Smith from about 1919. She notes her father’s stiff pose and awkward arms and, from the look of the mud on his chaps, speculates that “he had ridden into town on his horse in his working clothes and was stopped by an itinerant photographer,” then had been persuaded to pose against a painted backdrop (61). She recounts his life, beginning with his birth in the Métis colony in Alberta, Canada and his childhood on the Flathead reservation, through his Jesuit schooling and work as a horse trader ; he lived in “a split world, a world of fading good and looming evil,” Smith judged, one in which survival required that he speak many languages, maneuver between worlds, and bridge cultures. “All this is invisible in the young man’s picture,” she laments ; the portrait simply shows “a gentle strength and a good-natured outlook that promises a bright future” (62).²

- 4 Portraits by white photographers have historically projected an absence of Native adaptation to modernity or revealed the pressure of assimilation into dominant white culture, compounding the familiar paradox that photographs signify in the absence of their subjects. Anishinaabe writer and scholar Gerald Vizenor considers such portraits not real representations of Native people but simulations of “indian” identity that substitute “signs of the real for the real itself,” to quote Jean Baudrillard’s phrase (Vizenor, 1998, 146). He calls these ethnographic simulations “fugitive poses” : portraits that falsely assert presence at sites where Native people have fled or been removed. These poses “are simulations of severance, not the pictures or stories of native survivance” (Vizenor, 1998, 154). In contrast with family or landscape photographs that serve as “common narratives of cultural remembrance,” those “fugitive poses of the *indian* other” (154) are portraits taken for the benefit of advancing a settler-colonial

culture. They provide “public evidence of dominance,” (157) while the many Natives who “had practiced medicine, composed music, published histories, novels, and poetry, won national elections, and traveled around the world before the turn of the century” (165) vanish from historical view. “Photographs are never worth the absence of narratives because languages are imagination and photographs are the simulations of culture and closure,” (157) Vizenor concludes.

- 5 Native photographers and writers have continued to debate the aesthetic and communal value of Indian portraits made by white photographers. In the essay “Blood Trails,” Choctaw/Cherokee/Irish writer Louis Owens writes in moving detail about his family’s effort to interpret old photographs that constituted the only record he had of some of his ancestors ; he came to see this visible history of loss as not the “absence of the real” but “a microcosmic representation of the extraordinary assimilationist pressures American Indian people have confronted for many generations” (148-9). The legacy of Edward S. Curtis has proved especially vexing. The portraits he posed in *The North American Indian* “have been so closely linked with the nineteenth century discourse of the ‘vanishing race’ that they have prompted sustained critical response” (Lidchi and Tsinhnahjinnie, 2009, xiv). Vizenor notes how Curtis deliberately “removed umbrellas, suspenders, the many tracks of civilization” and costumed his subjects “to preserve the fugitive poses of *indian* traditions” (160). Curtis’s portraits have permeated popular perceptions of “Indians” with such thoroughness that according to many viewers and critics they can no longer signify outside a colonial visual discourse.³ For example, in “American Myths and Indigenous Photography,” Tlingit/Nisga’a photographer Larry McNeil contends that “Curtis’s stoic Indians are often unidentified and immersed in a romanticized stereotypical mode of representation that does not allow them to exist in a contemporary world” (118). He mocks the title of one of Curtis’s most famous photographs, *The Vanishing Race*, because the term “vanishing” in the title evades the responsibility of white settlers for Indian removal and genocide, making “it sound as if the Indians got on their horses and rode off into the sunset, simply fading into nothingness, like evening mist...” (118). McNeil himself, meanwhile, is fully present. His own photography and visual narratives resist Curtis’s legacy through irony and humor, often playing with American myths and rewriting the scripts of classic Western films and television series. They also express his continued connection to his family and Native communities, locating them in their native lands along the Northwest Coast and surrounding them with the materials and symbols that define their everyday lives.

Figure 1

Larry McNeil, *Dad*, 2002.

© Larry McNeil 2017

- 6 Photographic portraits need not only mark the historical absence of Native people, McNeil and other Indigenous artists demonstrate; when recovered from archives, reframed within Native communities or by Native artists, or arranged into photo-texts, they can also celebrate generational continuities and prepare for acts of resistance, imaginative reoccupation, or visionary journeys. Henrietta Lidchi and Tsintahjinnie note in their introduction to *Visual Currencies: Reflections on Native Photography* that iconic images by white photographers “have inspired new Indigenous photography that subverts the very premise on which the originals were created, while deepening the mutual reference between new work and the archive” (xiv). Tsintahjinnie looks at portraits by Curtis and sees the opposite of a “vanishing race”: “I see perseverance” (Tsintahjinnie, 2003, 42). She recognizes that assuming the position of subject in portraits made through the start of the twentieth century was necessary for Native people to survive—and comes to discover that imagining herself as a photographic subject allows her to enter the frame. Momaday’s recollection of the Navajo woman and Smith’s writing about her family portraits also begin to counter the absences implicit in the photographs they address. Both artists inquire into the social and imaginative lives of the people pictured and indicate the need for new visual and literary forms to communicate more fully the many dimensions of Native subjectivity, a complexity that “never seems to be included in the thousand words” that a photograph is commonly declared to be “worth,” Tsintahjinnie observes (2003, 46). To understand Native identity “the way it was” at the moment Momaday’s father photographed the Navajo woman or Arthur Smith posed as a “cowboy dandy” requires that these portraits be viewed from multiple Indigenous perspectives and animated through spoken words and written texts.
- 7 New attention to Native photographers further reveals the rich collections of images they made for their own communities. Horace Poolaw’s beautiful, extensive record of Kiowa workers, soldiers, and families, a selection of which has been on permanent display at the National Museum of the American Indian and published in the book *For a*

Love of His People, constitutes one such collection. The recent book *Laguna Pueblo: A Photographic History* shares with a wide audience some of the thousands of photographs created by Lee Marmon since 1947, situating them within local histories derived from scholarly sources and tribal elders and personal memories narrated by Marmon and his longtime friend Tom Corbett. In her essay “The Indian with a Camera,” Marmon’s daughter Leslie Marmon Silko explains, “Pueblo people did not fear or hate cameras or the photographic image so much as they objected to the intrusive vulgarity of the white men who gazed through the lens” (Silko, 1996, 175). Her grandfather bought a snapshot camera in the 1920s, and the accessibility and portability of the Brownie camera and the dedication of Native photographers like Poolaw and Marmon to their craft meant that photographs also became integrated into family and tribal storytelling early in the twentieth century. Such archives remain “at the center of many intersecting and developing narratives,” both public and private (Lidchi and Tsinhnahjinnie, 2009, 72).

- 8 In many ways, the diverse creative projects by contemporary Indigenous photographers and writers engage and cannily adapt the practices of archival recovery, cultural research, and critical visibility studies advanced by scholars such as Laura Wexler, Deborah Willis, Christopher Pinney, Shawn Michelle Smith, and Tina Campt. Much of this recent work assesses and reframes the historical significance of black photographers and representations of black and colonial subjects through the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Willis, for example, discovered many photography studios run by African American photographers in the 1930s and 1940s that served a diverse clientele and produced rich visual records of local communities in Harlem and Washington, D. C., and she gathered her extensive research into the history of previously unknown black photographers in the U.S. for *Reflections in Black* (2000). Throughout her analysis of photographic archives, she tunes into photography’s shifting relationship with viewers, considering it as alternately “participatory, sometimes active, oftentimes passive. Photographers are my visual storytellers,” she writes (Willis and Lusaka, 1996, 3). In *Tender Violence*, Laura Wexler further reflects on politics of archival recovery. Referring to Willis’s contributions to expanding this archive and Angela Davis’s caution that incorporating black photographers within the critical field also exposes critical gaps and the limitations on visual expression imposed by racism, Wexler claims that “our very recognition of the presence of certain nineteenth-century black American photographers must be read simultaneously as a sign of absence” (Wexler, 2000, 2). Wexler reports on the equivocal lessons she learned from working with the extensive archives of women photographers from the late nineteenth century; she discovered both the photographers’ determination to make domestic life (selectively) visible and the many ways that “photographs shaped the look and power of white supremacy at the century’s end” (8). Even as she seeks opportunities for “reenvisioning” these images in the present, Wexler finds many “denials in these women’s photographs of the structural consequences of slavery, colonization, industrialization, and forced assimilation” (7).
- 9 Such critical attention to the politics of the archive and the social lives of images has established a strong foundation for continued investigations of photography’s “other histories,” to quote the title of Pinney’s recent influential collection of essays. Contributors to this volume both interrogate colonial archives and focus on practices of “contemporary photographic self-fashioning” (Pinney and Peterson, 2003, 1). Tsinhnahjinnie’s essay “When Is a Photograph Worth a Thousand Words,” included in

the volume, declares her intention to “take responsibility to reinterpret images of Native peoples” within this critical conversation and proposes looking again with her mind “ready, primed with stories of resistance and resilience, stories of survival” (41). Instead of seeing static subjects, she views the portraits as if she, too, were the observed, placing herself within the frame. From that perspective, she gives herself the power to move back in time and to create “imagined photographs” and complete family albums (40). Placing herself at the productive intersection of archival research, theorizations of race and gender, critical visuality studies, and multi-media art, Tsínahjinnie exemplifies ongoing innovative approaches to using images to communicate beyond the conditions of their making and thus allowing them to resonate differently within the communities for whom they matter.

- 10 In this essay I consider how photographs have inspired contemporary Native writers to develop a photo-poetics, a strategy of survivance that combines images, stories, and poems to express individual identities and cultural continuity. This strategy undoes the opposition between subject and observer and puts Native bodies both at the center of visual imagining and in motion through time and space.⁴ By incorporating images into their texts, Native writers realize the potential for their bodies and voices, as well as those of their ancestors, to express new relations to their lands and their visual histories. In addition to exploring Tsínahjinnie’s conception of photographic sovereignty, I build on Camp’s specification that reading photographs requires “understanding the social, cultural, and historical relationships figured in the image”—that is, thinking about the “*social life of the photo*” (Camp, 2012, 6 ; italics in the text).⁵ Reading Indigenous photo-texts means attending to strategies Native writers use to visualize interior landscapes and family relationships, as well as to how choices of framing, arrangement, and sequence direct new practices of reading visual texts.
- 11 Among Native writers, Leslie Silko (Laguna Pueblo) and Joy Harjo (Muskogee Creek) have experimented most extensively with mobile and multidimensional photo-texts. “Native women’s literature presents ways of thinking through the contradictions that arise from the paradoxes and contradictions that colonialism presents,” Seneca scholar Mishuana Goeman argues in *Mark My Words : Native Women Mapping Our Nations* (Goeman 4), and Silko and Harjo provide foundational examples of this process. They use photographic portraits to generate imaginative motion and written stories to create pathways between physical, interior, and spiritual worlds ; as they write images into their texts, they enact ways of thinking through and around the paradoxes presented by colonial ways of seeing. “Among many Native peoples, to imagine is not to see an illusion,” explains Sean Teuton (Cherokee) ; “it is to manifest that which once did not exist” (S. Teuton 27). Silko and Harjo manifest complex family networks and temporalities through their verbal and textual responses to photographic images, and they engage each medium to resist the conventional and historically oppressive uses of the other. They also explore many ways that Native women’s bodies “articulate differently in different spaces” (Goeman 12). For both writers, images of the body are essential for their strategies of “compositional resistance,” defined by Rader as practices of selecting material, organizing a sequence, or mixing genres that counter dominant aesthetic modes (Rader, 2011, 5). In effect, Silko and Harjo take bodies out of the pictures they write about and place them on pages with new texts, transforming their identities ; alternatively, they disperse them into new landscapes, among newly recalled kin, or in contemporary situations, allowing their shapes to shift and their skins to become porous borders between past and present, as well as between inner and

outer worlds. By reoccupying the spaces of photographic portraits with imaginary bodies, they assert the power of inner vision over objective representation. Their photo-texts thus declare survivance in Vizenor's terms : "an active sense of presence over absence, deracination, and oblivion" (Vizenor, 2009, 85).

Continuous Recall : Leslie Silko's Laguna Storytelling

- 12 Silko is a member "of a generation of Native writers and artists [...] who preserve traditional stories as they articulate the discourse of modernity," (Kastner 5) revealing its cultural flows, its uneven "trajectories of expectation" (Deloria 143), and its unspoken fears. For Silko, photography and family memories always intertwined, and she deploys both in her photo-texts to create narratives that link generations of Laguna women through the twentieth century and continue their tradition of storytelling. Her grandfather's snapshots were always within reach ; as her father and grandmother identified the people in the photographs for Leslie and her sisters, they told "wonderful stories about the old days, which in turn brought out even older stories that stretched far beyond the confines of the snapshots in the grasshopper basket" (Silko, 1996, 176). Her memoir *The Turquoise Ledge* confirms that her father, who worked for his father at the Marmon Trading Post, was never without his camera :

During the day when my father made grocery deliveries to homes in the village or when he went to the depot to pick up packages for the store, he always took a camera along. He once told me a true photographer is never without a camera. Sometimes he'd be asked to take a photograph of kids or an elder and right on the spot he did it because he always had a camera with him. He was very disciplined about his cameras. We kids had to ride in the back seat with all the bags of camera equipment. In this way even as children we saw how absolutely serious my father was about photography. (Silko, 2010, 58-9)

- 13 Lee Marmon knew well the people he photographed and the rhythms of their everyday lives ; his respect for them went a long way towards correcting "the outrages to privacy that had been forced on Pueblo people in the past" by white strangers" (Silko, 1996, 176-177). Silko recalls that her father always tried to make the "old folks" feel comfortable by taking their pictures outside, where flashes wouldn't be needed. He "liked to take informal portraits" of people with the things they grew or made : "the old man with his prize watermelon, the old woman with her oven bread on a board. He knew that these old folks, who had loved him and watched out for him as a child, would pass to Cliff House soon" (Silko, 1996, 186).
- 14 For Lee Marmon, photography created an expanding and accessible record of the living community. For Leslie Silko, storytelling is "a whole way of seeing yourself, the people around you, your life, the place of your life in the bigger context, not just in terms of nature and location, but in terms of what has gone on before, what's happened to other people. So it's a whole way of being" (Arnold 71, qtd. in Peterson 45). She uses photography's imaginative potential to sustain Laguna storytelling, which she considers "the only way to seek justice" for tribal dispossession (Silko, 1996, 20). Even though she has "been around trays of developer and hypo under red safelights since [she] was old enough to perch on a high stool," she claims that photography "is still magic" (Silko, 1996, 180). Throughout her work, imaginative movement between visual and literary modes expresses her deep curiosity about the kinds of knowledge each can produce and her conviction that the viewer's position and feeling about a subject

shapes its appearance and meaning. As a writer, she is less concerned with recording experience than with activating historical, mythic, and magical imaginations ; like Larry McNeil's photographs, her work is "unencumbered by objectivity" (McNeil 111). From early works (such as *Storyteller* and *Ceremony*) through short photo-narratives (such as "An Essay on Rocks" and *Sacred Water*) to the "self-portrait" of *The Turquoise Ledge*, Silko's visual narratives connect traditional stories with contemporary experience and literary invention. She incorporates photographic and pictographic images, historical captions, stories, and poems into narratives that integrate visual, historical, and oral sources and seeks what she considers an ongoing "communal truth."⁶ Her vision of Laguna as manifested in her texts thus comes to exceed any single image or photographic archive, as it involves the deeper process of transformation described by Cherokee scholar Christopher Teuton in his definition of Indigenous vision: the perpetual "movement from alienation to knowledge, from lack of connection to a relationship with place, from a lack of cultural identity to a deeply felt cultural identity" (C. Teuton, 2010, 60–61).

- 15 Silko's 1981 photo-text *Storyteller*, revised in a new edition published in 2012, still provides one of the most powerful examples of how visual, oral, and written texts can be integrated to tell stories of survivance.⁷ David Moore helpfully describes the role of this text within larger cycles of Silko's work, explaining that it sets "a pattern that repeatedly regrounds her fictional work in place-based 'reality'" (Moore 82). *Storyteller* begins with a description of "a tall Hopi basket with a single figure/woven into it which might be a Grasshopper or/a Hummingbird Man. In the basket are hundreds/of photographs taken since the 1890s around Laguna," (Silko, 2012, 1) many by her grandfather Hank or her father. Silko reflects on her compositional choices in her introduction : "I wanted readers to have a feeling of the landscape and the context of the Pueblo villages where the stories take place, so I included photographs. [...] I wanted readers to have a sense of the family I came from, so I included family snapshots, too" (xxv). Because Laguna people take photography so seriously, the images "are part of many of the stories" and "many of the stories can be traced in the photographs," she writes (1). Her grounded, tribal, inclusive approach clearly derives from traditional Laguna conceptions of time as continuously present and recognizes women's powerful role as storytellers ; it also reveals her continuous rethinking of her relation to her father's photographs and of ways to put them to her own creative use. While most of the photographs in the book present the reader with pictures of Laguna life and land filtered through Lee Marmon's perspective, the many ways that Silko frames and animates them creates her own "living landscape that is a significant site of Laguna knowledge and tradition" (Peterson 45).
- 16 As Silko states in the Introduction, a narrative structure allows us to explain ourselves or to remember our experience (xvii). However, just as the photographs are jumbled in the basket, the stories and poems in *Storyteller* are organized around seemingly accidental or associative connections. The text moves backwards and forwards in time, across tribal and regional boundaries, and between realistic and mythic modes, in patterns often described as circular or interwoven. Its play with photographic images, recollections, stories, and poems makes it difficult for readers to find paths into the text and coherent patterns to organize it. "*Storyteller* contains multiplicities," Peterson explains, "a multitude of genres, verbal and visual texts, and challenges its readers to weave the story for themselves out of the various threads and colors and details that the collection contains" (Peterson 42). In addition to citing some of the models already

proposed by scholars for reading the text (according to its web-like structure or by thematic section) Peterson proposes pursuing a central narrative strand that links explorations of “the permeable boundary between past and present” (43). There are many potential routes into and through this open and evolving text, and these possibilities account for its sustained power to generate new interpretations.

- 17 I find that the photographs provide the most effective imaginative map for reading *Storyteller*. Silko organizes bundles of recollections, tales, poems, and images of the land around portraits of the women in her family who taught her how to tell stories : Susie Reyes Marmon, or “Aunt Susie ;” her great Grandma A’mooh ; and her Grandma Lillie. Silko also includes photographs of herself and her sisters from their childhood to indicate that they bear the responsibility for portraying themselves and continuing their tribal histories. For example, one photograph shows Leslie and her sisters Gigi and Wendy posing with pottery water jars, looking like “the Laguna women did in the old days when they carried water” (Silko, 2012, 78).

Figure 2.

Lee Marmon, *Susie Reyes Marmon, 110th Birthday*, 1987. 2000-017-0015. Lee Marmon Pictorial Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico.

- 18 They dressed up in borrowed costumes for the photograph, mimicking poses of young Pueblo women often photographed by Curtis, Adam Clark Vroman and other white photographers in the early twentieth century. Placed on a page following a landscape photograph dramatizing “two fundamental elements of human survival on this high desert,” (77) rain clouds and natural sandstone cisterns, here they perform their real identities as the descendants of earlier generations of Laguna women, a family still together in their home territory. The group of photographs that concludes the text includes one of Silko as a girl, smiling, in front of her horse (taken by her father, Lee Marmon, 1963) ; a second of her grandfather Henry Marmon, posing for his school picture at Riverside City College in 1916 (photographer unknown) ; and a third of an unknown woman, her great-grandmother, and her father with their pinto colt (taken by Grandpa Hank, around 1936). As a concluding triptych, these photographs integrate three generations of the Marmon family within their home territory. Each portrait or group of photographs organizes a series of reflections, stories, and other creative expressions ; each inspires the writer to assemble a different set of imaginative tools for survivance. Through the arrangement of photographs, poems, narratives, and factual recollections, Silko additionally creates for her reader the opportunity “to visualize [themselves] as being located *within* the story being told, within the landscape” (Silko, 1996, 43).
- 19 Silko’s Aunt Susie provides the first important model for how women in her family turned enforced formal education to their own advantage. The first photograph Silko includes of herself in the book shows Aunt Susie leaning against a fence at branding

time and looking down protectively at Leslie when she was a very young girl ; the caption elaborates that while her father would take pictures of the cattle, Aunt Susie would “cook all morning long” (5). In the poem that frames this photograph, Silko describes watching her aunt work with books and papers spread over the kitchen table and expresses astonishment at her aunt’s patience in listening to her grandniece’s questions and answering them all. A graduate of Carlisle Indian School, Aunt Susie “had come to believe very much in books” (4). At the same time, she recognized that “the atmosphere and conditions / which had maintained this oral tradition in Laguna culture / had been irrevocably altered by the European intrusion— / principally by the practice of taking the children / away from Laguna to Indian schools” (4).

- 20 In the story that follows this recollection, Silko retells Aunt Susie’s account of how a young Laguna girl vanished, a story that might be read as a cautionary tale for children who might rebel against the constraints of family demands and let themselves become so enchanted by the lure of a beautiful, distant place that they never return. The girl, Waithea, runs from home when her mother asks her to retrieve wood to make a fire in order to cook *yashtoah*, the corn meal the girl requests. When the sticks of wood she brings back in a basket turn out to be black snakes even after a second attempt, Waithea decides to leave her frustration behind and goes to drown herself in beautiful lake *Kawaik*, leaving her mother bereft. The story ends with the mother searching for her daughter at the lake, carrying a bundle of her garments, and discovering that the girl had vanished. The mother then returns to her home at Acoma, spreads out her daughter’s clothes, and watches them turn into all colors of butterflies. As she remembers Aunt Susie speaking it, Silko writes this story in a way that conveys not just the plot but its affect : the feeling of tenderness expressed through her aunt’s voice, as well as the shift in tone at the end that indicated when “the story wasn’t sad any longer” (14). In the context of *Storyteller*, the retelling of Waithea’s adventure shifts the power of the story across the generations and offers an alternate ending for Pueblo children taken away from their families : it imagines that they will return, like Aunt Susie, to share the power and beauty of their knowledge and remain present in other physical and spiritual forms. Other photographs of Silko and her sisters as children included in the book, such as the snapshot of Grandma A’mooh reading to Wendy and Gigi (31), reinforce both of these meanings, as they show female relatives caring for, reading to, and raising the next generation. Fittingly, Aunt Susie’s portrait at age 110 faces Silko’s own retelling of the book’s central story about the origins of white witchery, situating both this storyteller and the knowledge essential for undoing colonial oppression at the center of Silko’s photo-text.

Figure 3.

Lee Marmon, *Leslie, Wendy, Gigi Marmon*. 2000-017 B12-F68-1. Lee Marmon Pictorial Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico.

- 21 The next cluster of recollections, poems, and stories centers around Silko's Grandma A'mooh, first pictured in the family photograph with her sisters Wendy and Gigi. Immediately framing the photograph is Silko's poetic account of how her great-grandmother lived next door when she was growing up and "cared for me while my mother worked" (31). Silko also remembers her grandmother's traditional ways : "She still washed her hair with yucca roots," cleaned her teeth with juniper ash, and made her chili "on the grinding stone / the old way" (32). A second layer of framing provides more complex perspectives on A'mooh's role in articulating Native conceptions of animals and the imagination. The secondary frame consists of "Storyteller," the story preceding the portrait and its photo-poetic frame, and "Indian Song : Survival," the poem following it. "Storyteller" is one of Silko's most celebrated stories, and for good reason, as in sparse and haunting prose it powerfully restructures the relationship between a young Yupik woman, an old Yupik man, and the white people or Gussucks who have come to the Alaskan village of Bethel greedy for oil, money, and easy pleasure. In its totality—its structure, language, and imagery—Rader argues, this story "embodies resistance" (Rader, 2011, 172). Much of the narrative intertwines the old man's retelling of the story of chasing a giant bear with the woman's story of following her curiosity about Gussuck men, their work, and their way of life ; throughout her adventures, the woman keeps returning to the old man, who keeps insisting until he dies, "It will take a long time, but the story must be told. There must not be any lies" (25). Attuned to the topography of the tundra and the shifting conditions of the frozen river in the winter, the girl has cultivated intimate knowledge of her native landscape but is still learning "to see the end" (29) of her grandfather's story.⁸ She decides to retaliate against the shopkeeper who killed her parents by selling them a tin of poison rather than alcohol : she entices another man to follow her across the icy river just as it's beginning to thaw and break open. Only when she faces pressure from her lawyer to tell what she considers to be a false version of her actions—that the man's death was an "accident" rather than the result of her deliberate plan to drown him—does she realize that she can now "see the way it must be told, year after year as the old man had done,

without lapse or silence” (30). This fiction aligns within a single narrative frame the old man’s traditional story of tracking the bear and the Yupik woman’s telling of how she enticed the Gussuck man to track her, showing how the stories connect across generations to communicate truths necessary for individual and cultural survival. And as the story ends with the image of the old man finally meeting his bear, yet another version begins in the context of Silko’s photo-text, with the image of Grandma A’mooh reading from a book to her granddaughters.

- 22 By arranging the photograph of her grandmother to follow “Storyteller,” Silko simultaneously asserts the integrity of the fictional account of intertwined narratives and opens a new chapter in her own family history. This arrangement also builds relationships between Indigenous landscapes and cultures, as it links Yupik and Laguna experience.⁹ The process of transgressing tribal and geographical boundaries to imagine common strategies of resistance continues with the poem “Indian Song : Survival.” Here the speaker recounts a “desperation journey north,” a journey in which she sleeps “with the river,” is “hunted for my feathers,” and is accompanied by a “Mountain lion, with dark yellow eyes” (34). While the “mountain lion man” rests in the branches of a willow tree, she sinks into the sand and water and seeks protection in a spider’s web. It is the mountain lion that shows her the way forward, up to Cloudy Mountain, and keeps track of the passing of time. He speaks to her :

It is only a matter of time, Indian
you can’t sleep with the river forever.
Smell winter and know. (35)

- 23 By addressing her as “Indian,” the mountain lion generalizes her status (as “Indian,” not as specifically Laguna) and reinforces her human, mortal identity. Even in this invented encounter, however, the speaker resists the role the male spirit being created for her. Instead, she responds to the invitation to wake up and smell winter with the following answer :

taste me,
I am the wind
touch me,
I am the lean gray deer
running on the edge of the rainbow. (35)

- 24 In a poem that negotiates survival through all the senses and through speech rather than entirely through vision, this declaration positions the speaker as the empowered successor to the Yupik girl of “Storyteller” as well as to her Aunt Susie and Grandma A’mooh. For Indigenous women to survive, this “Indian Song” declares, they must engage their senses, transform their bodies into other physical forms, and integrate themselves into the landscape. Such articulation of the relationships that link natural forces and beings, which continues throughout the text, is reinforced at the end of “Lullaby,” the story that concludes this Grandma A’mooh cluster. Here the speaker, Ayah, sings her companion Chato to sleep in the winter night with a lullaby her grandmother sang to her : “*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*” (48 ; italics in the text).

- 25 Grandma A’mooh reappears in another cluster of photographs and stories later in the text, this time organized around recollections and inventions of the Apache leader Geronimo. This photographic portrait reveals an older, sterner woman looking up from her needlework, directly at the viewer (204). As positioned in the text, she seems to be

focused on the story to come, ready to listen. “A Geronimo Story” takes place during a campaign that the Marmon Battalion, a territorial militia, waged against the Apaches in the early 1880s. While it begins with the premise that the scouts are tracking Geronimo, it keeps diverting the pursuit with detailed accounts of decimated camps and trails through the mountains. By the end, the story turns out to be about the greater power that Geronimo exerts as a source for storytelling and an occasion for deer hunting in the present ; those tracking Geronimo find more satisfaction in narrating his escape and pursuing their own hunt. The trickster humor in the story and the interplay of story and photograph thus work to celebrate the presence of storytellers against the historical reality of the famous “fugitive” posing for his picture. Rader characterizes “A Geronimo Story” as “a masterful corrective text that blends Laguna oral and written history in hopes of debunking Cowboy mythologies of Geronimo, Indians, and the Southwest.” (Rader, 2014, 312) Followed by the 1928 photograph of Geronimo, another photograph of Wesson Peak in the Tucson mountains, and a letter to fellow poet James Wright about roosters, the texts collected in this bundle “are all attempts to represent a people and a place in a multifaceted way” (Rader, 2014, 312).¹⁰

- 26 The shift in intended prey from the Apache leader to deer in “A Geronimo Story” also anticipates the shapeshifting powers of Silko as a storyteller. When a hunted being escapes, the prey becomes invisible to the hunter—and newly present in Silko’s imagination. The one who escapes thus provides an imaginary body and voice for speaking of the experiences that resist being captured in a single photographic frame or otherwise captured on the page. Silko demonstrates her ability to control her own presence in one of the last long poems and the storyteller’s “best story”: “The Storyteller’s Escape.” In this poem, the “old teller” imagines herself as the last survivor, but she won’t let herself die until she finds someone who will look back, see her, and be able to describe the moment when “The black hills rise between us / the shady rocks are above her head / and she was thinking” (241). Until there is a witness to confirm her presence in the landscape, remember her voice, and have her “own way” with images and stories, the single surviving storyteller will sit against the rock, wear the sun as “a shawl” on her back, and invent another story. As *Storyteller* gathers traditional and invented stories and accumulates examples of inventive, successful escapes, Silko’s text, too, builds an imaginary world for its readers that they can potentially recreate in their own stories.
- 27 Throughout *Storyteller*, hunting functions as a recurring thematic thread, providing another way of reading the stories within the text and the Pueblo landscape, redefining the ethics of photographic representation, and proclaiming the imaginative power of storytelling both within and beyond the Laguna community. Aunt Alice recounts many hunting adventures of Yellow Woman or Kochininako, because this aunt “loved to tell my sisters and me” all about this mythical figure’s “romantic encounters with Kat’sinas and other supernatural beings” (50). One time Kochininako outwitted the giant *Estrucuyu* with the help of the Twin Hero Brothers, Aunt Alice tells her on a day when Silko and her sisters had been left behind by their parents, who were deer hunting on Mt. Taylor. On this occasion, the story transforms the listener’s feeling of abandonment into active resistance as her aunt’s recollection of these spirit beings empowers Silko to imagine herself as a hunter, a survivor, and a storyteller. Family photographs inserted later in the text reinforce everyday practices of hunting and horseback riding as well : Silko includes one of her young sisters proudly clutching the antlers of a buck her father shot and loading into the back of his pickup truck (167) and one of herself

holding the reins of her beloved horse (257). “Many of my happiest hours were spent riding Joey in the hills around Laguna,” she writes in the caption.

- 28 In a proper and successful hunt, we learn through Silko’s stories and essays, humans show gratitude for their ancestors and the land that sustains them. Humans and animals express respect for the other, especially when the stronger or cannier being prevails. In “Interior and Exterior Landscapes,” Silko asserts, “[a]ll phases of the hunt are conducted with love : the love the hunter and the people have for the Antelope People, and the love of the antelope who agree to give up their meat and blood so that human beings will not starve” (Silko, 1996, 26). Or, as she describes it in one prose poem in *Storyteller* :

In the fall, the Laguna hunters go to the hills and mountains around Laguna People to bring back the deer. The people think of the deer as coming to give themselves to the hunters so that the people will have meat through the winter. Late in the winter the Deer Dance is performed to honor and pay thanks to the deer spirits who’ve come home with the hunters that year. Only when this has been properly done will the spirits be able to return to the mountain and be reborn into more deer who will, remembering the reverence and appreciation of the people, once more come home with the hunters. (183)

- 29 Visualizing the rituals involved in hunting through photographs and stories reinforces “the reciprocal and respectful relationship between humans, animals, and spiritual presences ; thus verbal and visual texts resonate with each other to convey foundational cultural values” (Peterson 46). A photograph of Buffalo Dancers, placed in between Silko’s recollection of spotting a giant brown bear while hunting at age 13 and a poem describing her uncle’s capture of a large buck, extends the personal memories into a communal context. Silko explains in the caption that the dancers inhabit animals’ bodies and perform the role of their spirits : “The Buffalo Dancers commemorate the transformation of the Buffalo Spirit Being into human form and the alliance that existed between humans and buffalo” (Silko, 2012, 75). A similar transformation of the Eagle spirit beings into human form occurs during the Eagle Dance, as documented in this similar photograph by Lee Marmon (not included in Silko’s photo-text).

Figure 4.

Lee Marmon, *Laguna Eagle Dancers*, 1949. 2000-017-0027. ZIM CSWR Pictorial Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico.

- 30 In *Storyteller's* hunting poems and stories, Silko both represents Laguna values and enacts individual quests for heroes and spirit beings, continuing the kind of transformative work evident in "Indian Song: Survival." In "A Hunting Story," the speaker pursues a lover who resisted her and escaped "in all directions / of the winds" (188). The poem begins at night and continues:

All night
your eyes
something burns dark
in old juniper trees.
the she-owl
echoes
along the cliff.
The stars
pull the sky down with them.
I smooth your belly
with my hand
round and round... (Silko, 2012, 186)

- 31 Is the belly a man's? A deer's? Before resolving the ambiguity, the time shifts to morning, when the speaker "counted the rattles / the last whistles in your throat." Has the lover been or become a snake? No matter: "I put my mouth on yours."
- 32 In the following stanzas, the speaker anticipates her lover's escape:

I saw how you would go
spilling out
between ivory ribs
seeping under the tall gate
where earth sucked you in
like rainwater. (Silko, 2012, 187)

- 33 The lover disappears and disperses, leaving his wife and sons to burn his jacket and sell his car, while the speaker is left to remember "a song / you never sang to me / the same way." The speaker continues to hunt for him among the stars and hears "sudden sounds / that crack / through moonlight thickets," imagining that one day when he will "step out / into sight," she'll be waiting.

Then we could gather
Fluttering darkfeathered dreams
Before they startle
Before they fly far away. (Silko, 2012, 188)

- 34 Notable here are the suggestions of the lover's continuous transformation (from man to deer to snake to star), the return of the phrase describing his escape ("spilling out / between ivory ribs") in another poem a few pages later ("Where Mountain Lion Lay Down with Deer"), and the emergence of the "darkfeathered dreams" as living beings that the speaker imagines she and her lover might capture together. Each of these aspects continues the ongoing work of redefining "vanishing" as willed transformation and generating embodied images that correspond to the writer's imagination of her future.
- 35 When read within the sequence of *Storyteller's* images, recollections, poems, and stories, "A Hunting Story" resonates with other moments of mythic and erotic communication between human and animal beings and vividly expresses the sensation of being part of an interconnected natural world that links categories of being and Indigenous experience while remaining located specifically within Laguna land.

Through imagining contact with her lover, the speaker creates a passageway between self and other, and between interior and exterior landscapes. Instead of seeking victory over another being, even in love, this story rewrites the activity of hunting as one of perpetually shifting pursuit, first of a physical being and eventually of a delicate, shared idea. With echoes of Emily Dickinson's poetry, which Silko has identified as central to her own writing, this poem entwines the speaker's open-ended pursuit of her desire within a web of Laguna rituals and stories, and it opens a new path towards realizing the speaker's—and the author's—dreams and visions of survivance.

Perpetual Motion : Joy Harjo's Visionary Bodies

- 36 Like Silko, Joy Harjo intertwines photographs, stories, and poems to activate her voice as a writer and to keep tribal memories and Native histories alive. Silko asserts visual sovereignty over the interior and exterior landscapes of Laguna Pueblo by framing photographs of her relatives and the Laguna landscape with bundles of recollections, stories, and poems and thus continues to define and map Laguna identity ; Harjo asserts sovereignty over the images the body carries within and over the routes through which her speakers travel. The journeys that Harjo makes in her poetry often follow traditional Muskogee paths (along the Mississippi and other waterways, along the vertical axis that links earth and sky, and within Creek land in Oklahoma). However, the ritual patterns her poems enact might be considered pan-tribal, since they reconfigure stories of creation and emergence, confrontations with enemy beings, and homecomings. Harjo confronts the legacies of colonialism for Creek people, but she also seeks to imagine a future that will not be defined by their colonial past or limited by tribal nationalism. In order to find spaces where memory can be recovered and put to positive use, Harjo entwines journeys of emergence and transcendence with moments of everyday encounter, reconfiguring her body as a renewed spirit along the way.
- 37 In Harjo's early work, the land of New Mexico, as photographed and written, speaks of the worlds beyond the surface of experience ; more recently, she's taken on voices from her Muskogee ancestors, staged her return to Creek land in Oklahoma, explored connections with Indigenous people in Hawaii and Central America, and affirmed shared visions with friends in Europe. Harjo claims in the essay "The Art of Resistance" that the conception of the land as "a being, an entity, a repository of meaning" distinguishes Indigenous cultures. "There is an ongoing relationship between human beings and the land," she explains ; "It is the keeper of our bones, stories, and songs. In this manner of thinking/being there is no hierarchy to differentiate value between living things" (Harjo and Winder 125). The places she imagines and links are as important as those she physically sees ; the clearest emotional insight comes when she is "traveling through the dark" or at the liminal time just before dawn. Her relation to photographs from each phase also reveals her strategic redefinition of vision as a route towards "intellectual and emotional insight." For Harjo and other Native writers, "this type of vision lies near the core" of each tribally specific idea of imagination (C. Teuton, 2010, 61). Harjo conceives of seeing itself as a participatory act : "You are present at the moment. And what you've seen and taken in is dangerous—to the mind, body, soul, and spirit—and can infect everyone, not just in the present moment but through all time" (Harjo and Winder 9). By approaching vision as an act of perception that renders the viewer a witness, Harjo confers responsibility on both the producer and consumer of

images to redefine the process of seeing as a route towards intellectual and emotional insight.

- 38 In “Remember,” an early poem from *She Had Some Horses* (1983), Harjo urges the reader to imagine herself as the skin of the world and recall its planetary history, issuing an invitation to take responsibility for seeing similar to Tsinnahjinnie’s concept of “photographic sovereignty” :
- Remember the earth whose skin you are :
 Red earth, black earth, yellow earth, white earth
 Brown earth, we are earth.
 Remember the plants, trees, animal life who all have their
 tribes, their families, their histories, too. Talk to them,
 Listen to them. They are alive poems. (Harjo, 2002, 42)
- 39 Through listening to the voice of the wind speak through memory, the reader will find “the/Origin of this universe,” Harjo promises, and become all people—perhaps, even, the universe itself. Although these commands to “remember” are spoken rather than visualized, each iteration requires that the reader conjures images of family and the natural world and situate herself within an ever-moving constellation. In a poem from a later collection, *A Map to the Next World* (2000), Harjo claims, “We no longer know the names of the birds here, how to speak to them by their/personal names. /Once we knew everything in this lush promise” (19). Elsewhere she laments, “At birth we know everything, can see into the shimmer of complexity. When a newborn looks at you it is with utter comprehension. We know where we are coming from, where we have been. And then we forget it all” (17). Remembering is an active and ongoing process, one that engages archival and imaginary photographic albums.
- 40 Throughout her work, Harjo accepts responsibility to “Keep track of the errors of our forgetfulness” and show how “Our forgetfulness stalks us, walks the earth behind us, leaving a trail of paper diapers, needles and wasted blood” (Harjo, 2002, 129-30). At the same time, she points the way towards other, still emerging worlds where each of us “will have to navigate by [our] mother’s voice, renew the song she is singing” and learn again to see from the light of “fresh courage” that “glimmers from planets” as we accept our mistakes, embrace our imperfection, and make our “own map” (Harjo, 2002, 129-30). Her poetry refuses to let her speaker’s body inhabit a still world and develops an extensive vocabulary for the forces and types of movement that would blur an image (wind, mist, rain, glitter, vibration, sunrise). Such verbal, thematic, and formal agility is needed when countering colonialism and capitalism, whose illusory power “is seductive and sparkles,” glittering like “false gold” (Harjo, 2000, 17). For Harjo, the body is a container for the soul, a living being like other earthly and celestial bodies. It holds memories that are always in danger of slipping out of consciousness and vanishing from the physical universe ; in fact, Harjo has spoken in an interview about how memory “isn’t situated in the past, but moves about freely” and speculated about different kinds of non-human memory : the memory of stones, eternal but locked in place, and “over-memory, the ocean of all memories” (Harjo, 2002, 11).
- 41 Engagement with photographs provides a critical means for her to explore how bodies carry and project memory and reveals important continuities in the collaborative structure of her published books.¹¹ With photographs and poems that visualize traveling between the present and the past, and between real and imaginary worlds, Harjo maps the “boundaries that separate time, space, myth, and personal experience” (Womack 226) and seeks the forms that will transport the knowledge she discovers. The

spatial, historical, and geopolitical frameworks for Harjo's writing keep expanding, but strong thematic threads run through her work that tether the body at the center of this active process. In each of her photo-texts, Harjo stages meetings between the bodies that constitute her identity at a particular stage of her creative process, and these meetings propel her towards connections between past and future worlds. In collaboration with astronomer and photographer Stephen Strom, she published *Secrets from the Center of the World* (1989), a book that juxtaposes photographs of the New Mexico desert and short prose poems on facing pages to imagine the body's journeys through the land. Strom's photographs serve to make voices visible ; they show how the earth can speak powerful stories if we learn how to listen with and beyond our own bodies. Harjo writes in the Preface,

There are voices inside rocks, shallow washes, shifting skies ; they are not silent. And there is movement, not always the violent motion of earthquakes associated with the earth's motion or the stead unseen swirl through the heavens, but other motion, subtle, unseen, like breathing. A motion, a sound, that if you allow your own inner workings to stop long enough, moves into the place inside you that mirrors a similar landscape ; you too can see it, feel it, hear it, know it. (Harjo and Strom, 1989, n.p.)

- 42 The photographs "are of [the earth's] own origins as the keeper of bones ; of survival ; of the travels and changes of the people moving on it, inside it ; of skies" (Harjo and Strom n.p.). You can look at a photograph by Strom and "know something of the way the land speaks," Harjo claims. "The photographs are not separate from the land, or larger than it. Rather they gracefully and respectfully exist inside it. Breathe with it. The world is not static but inside a field that vibrates. The whole earth vibrates" (Harjo and Strom n.p.). She views the land itself as "a poem of ochre and burst sand I could never write" (Harjo and Strom 30) and comes to see herself as "dreamed" (50) by the earth, emphasizing throughout this collaboration the way an apparently still image contains the potential for an infinite motion.
- 43 To open the passageway between an individual body's perception and the earth, she advises her reader to "look with the mind of the swirling earth near Shiprock" ; then, she promises, "you become the land, beautiful" (Harjo and Strom 4). The most powerful secrets/stories are those that can't be seen : "A summer storm reveals the dreaming place of bears. But you cannot see their shaggy dreams of fish and berries, any land signs supporting evidence of bears, or any bears at all. What is revealed in the soaked rich earth, forked waters, and fence line shared with patient stones is the possibility of everything you can't see" (18). Harjo suggests that the world as seen in the photograph could suddenly be transformed into something entirely unexpected : the tamaracks "could be crows, leaning over the edge of the world, tasting the wind blown up from a pool of newly born planets" (20) ; the desert could be reimagined as a "ghost ocean" with "invisible fish" (46). She simultaneously questions the reliability of photographic representation and transforms it into new knowledge, and this work prepares for transgressions between the boundaries that separate ground, body, and sky as figured in such later poems as "Songline of Dawn," in which flying above the desert at dawn reveals "the valley of monster bones / left scattered in the dirt to remind us that breathing / is rooted somewhere other than the lungs" and takes her and the reader "closer to the gods that we ever thought possible" (Harjo, 2000, 13).
- 44 In *Soul Talk, Song Language* (2011), Harjo includes her own photographs of the ground (such as the path along one of Albuquerque's acequias) and the clouds as seen from an

airplane. These are two types of landscapes she often writes about as the forms that provide her with “Global Roots,” a term that expresses both her attachment to tribal and lived homelands and the vast perspective and freedom that comes from travel across the globe. While her body physically links the earth in New Mexico with the atmosphere far above through motion (whether walking, driving, or flying by plane), her imagination flows along the real and imagined waterways that have shaped Muscogee life. “I think of the Mississippi River, the Gulf Coast, the Atlantic, and the Caribbean, as part of the network of Muscogee trade routes,” she writes. “Now these routes have been expanded by air flight. I consider what has come to be known as Muscogee culture. Our culture contains many threads leading all over the world.” (88)

- 45 Harjo’s memoir *Crazy Brave* similarly uses photographs to link physical and imagined worlds, but this time the photographs also mark the distances between historical, mythic, and personal memories. Two photographs effectively frame the book. The first faces the title and shows her while a student at Indian School in Santa Fe ; the second appears after the acknowledgments and shows her at age 3, with her dog Lucky and the following caption : “When Sun leaves at dusk, it makes a doorway. We have access to ancestors, to eternity. Breathe out. Ask for forgiveness. Let all hurts and failures go. Let them go.” (Harjo, 2012, 171) The combination of snapshot and caption suggests that the memoir’s process of remembering the past continues to link her to her ancestors and renews her life’s “hurts and failures” as it leads towards a future in which she will release pain and disappointment, thus re-enacting the ceremonial “return from the enemy” imagined in *A Map to the Next World*. Again she bears the responsibility for continuing the stories of all the people who have created her : “My generation is now the door to memory,” she explains. The writing itself produces “the din of voices of so many people, and so many stories that want to come forth. [...] These people, our ancestors, want to be recognized ; they want to be remembered” (Harjo, 2012, 21).
- 46 Rather than memorialize her family and her ancestors in still images, however, in *Crazy Brave* Harjo renews their spirits by dreaming of their origins and allowing them to speak through her, or by painting them ; thus she allows their life to continue within her body and her writing, according to the four directions that shaped their collective progress through life. As Muscogee writer Craig Womack explains, an autobiographical narrative such as Harjo’s “continues to serve the nation well because it also explains the lives of contemporary Creeks who continue to live out the migration account” (249). She sees her great-aunt Polly Coppinger, mother of her uncle Osceola, the Seminole warrior, as if in a photographic portrait, and dreams of her African ancestors ; these dreams provide “doorways” into other times and continents that contribute to the active formation and transformation of her identity. In the “South” section of *Crazy Brave*, Harjo claims that she got to know her grandmother Naomi Foster Harjo through sketching, “within the memory of my hands” (148). Just as her grandmother “painted to make a doorway between realms” when copying the famous lithograph of her uncle Osceola, so does Harjo paint to sustain the existence of her ancestors within her. She starts to think about warriors, wonders where the contemporary warriors are, questions the invisible contributions of women to the history of bravery—and begins to create herself as the woman poet warrior “Crazy Brave,” a compressed English rendering of the meaning of her last name in Muskogee : “so brave you’re crazy” (Harjo, 2000, 61). She comments elsewhere, “It is quite a name

to live up to,” this name which served as “a title of war for those who were fearless” (Harjo, 2000, 61).

- 47 As the memoir prepares for the emergence of Harjo’s creative being, it narrates her struggle to find the language and forms in which to express this complex, layered, and mobile identity, one that itself cannot be captured in any fixed image. In *A Map to the Next World*, she negotiates with her body the balance of oppositions that structure Muskogee thought, and recurring figures at the center of Muskogee culture (water, fire, crows) and ritual pathways provide the means for continuing to track the transformation of herself and her people. Her more recent work keeps expanding this and other traditions, speaking her identity as someone “always walking the line between the sacred and the profane,” always “making sense of what really can’t be made sense of” (Harjo, 2011, 70). Like the trickster figure of the rabbit, as a poet she “is always about the duality between here and there, sun and moon, sky and earth,” (Harjo, 2011, 70) body and mind. In *Crazy Brave*, she reclaims her identity from the inside out, through the language that produces the world she desires. She ends the memoir with a reflection on one of her first poems, written to release her fear after a panic attack. At that point, she realizes that the everyday language she speaks (*Please pass the salt. I would like. .. When are we going... I’ll meet you there*) is inadequate to her desire to create her identity as an artist. “I wanted the intricate and metaphorical language of my ancestors to pass through to my language, my life,” she writes (Harjo, 2012, 164). Then she manifests the spirit of poetry as “a kind of resurrection light,” as a “tall ancestor who has been with me since the beginning, or a bear or a hummingbird,” as “a hundred horses running the land in a soft mist,” and as “a woman undressing for her beloved in firelight.” In short, “It is none of these things. It is more than everything” (Harjo, 2012, 164). In providing an open sequence of figures for poetry itself, Harjo envisions the creative spirit as a Native body that can never be captured in a still frame.

Conclusion

- 48 Since the start of the Red Power movement, Native American fiction writers and poets have written with a heightened awareness of the power of images of Indians as circulated in mainstream U.S. culture and in the popular imagination and with a renewed attention to the power of words to manifest their own identities. By engaging the collaborative power of images and words within their texts, such writers as Momaday, Silko, and Harjo create “a critical space to privilege a range of Indigenous aesthetic strategies and access to traditionality in a political world” (Hearne 15), re-center their bodies and poetic voices within their imaginary homelands, and assert sovereignty over the private, public, and communal spaces they inhabit. Their texts demonstrate strategic interplay between voiced narrative, photographic images, and written language to produce new photo-poetic expressions of cultural survival and transformation.
- 49 Contemporary Native photographers also continue to integrate visual and verbal elements into their artistic practices and their everyday lives as they claim visual sovereignty. When Tsinhnahjinnie recently reflected on the value of images she collected from her family and friends, she emphasized the courage that young artists need to reinterpret traditional forms of expression and carry them forward into the

future. “When engaging visual sovereignty, one must do so with thoughtful confidence,” she claims (Lidchi and Tsinhnahjinnie 10). The images in her own living room include her father’s paintings and a print given to her by Diné artist Melanie Yazzie ; “These images make me feel strong every morning, preparing for the day,” (Lidchi and Tsinhnahjinnie 3) she writes, because they affirm creative continuities across cultures and generations. Later she describes discovering a photograph of her father, an artist who served in WWII, in his army uniform, and it brings her closer to him. She looks again at her family albums, which might have included the original of her embellished portrait of her Seminole “Grandma” surrounded by luminous globes that represent family spirits.

Figure 5.

Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie, *Grandma*, 2002. Reproduced with the permission of the artist.
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- 50 Along with her own portraits of family and relatives, these images clarify the attitude she comes to realize one must bring to visual sovereignty : confidence, developed from a clear sense of relation to the land and one’s ancestors, along with “innovative and peripheral vision” (Lidchi and Tsinhnahjinnie 11). Maintaining such connections requires agile motion and imaginative transformation. “It is inevitable that the community you represent will force you to dream beyond its imagining,” (10) she says. By thinking through photographic portraits, Native artists can continue, in Tsinhnahjinnie’s words, “to fly back and forth, up and down, through time” (16)—and propel themselves into stories and worlds still coming into focus.

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NOTES

1. My thanks to Nathalie Massip for the invitation to present some of the ideas in this essay at the "Staging American Bodies" conference in Nice in March, 2016 and to all the conference participants for their stimulating questions, presentations, and discussions.
2. Smith's own collages layer images, maps, iconic symbols, words, and photographs to create visual declarations of ongoing native presence. For excellent, lively analyses of Smith's work, see Rader, "Semiotics and Shared Modernity," and his *Engaged Resistance*.
3. Other writers and critics who have assessed the damaging colonial legacies of Curtis's archive include historian Christopher Lyman (whose study recounts the history of patronage that supported Curtis's project), Lippard (who recounts Curtis's role in promoting Indian tourism in *Partial Recall*), and film historian Joanna Hearne (who reveals some Native families who have been reunited as a result of researching the history of a film or a Curtis photograph).
4. Introduced and elaborated by Vizenor, the concept of cultural survivance refers to ongoing "resistance to absence, literary tragedy, nihilism, and victimry" (1) through telling stories that assert the presence and tribal sovereignty of native people. See Vizenor's *Native Liberty : Natural Reason and Cultural Survivance* (2009). For additional perspectives on this issue, consult *Survivance : Narratives of Native Presence* (2008).
5. In her fascinating study of the social life of black European family photographs, Campt begins with the claim "that images matter to black folk" (Campt, 2012, 5). She focuses on categories of images that might reveal everyday experiences of belonging or "practices of refusal, resistance, and contestation" that she describes as "practices of fugitivity," (112) especially family

photographs and other images of domestic life. She explores how these kinds of vernacular photographs not only make the histories of black diasporic communities visible but also provide the means for ordinary people to resist negative stereotypes ; through photographs, these communities “create a counterimage of who they are, as well as who they might be or might become” (5). Her nuanced readings of how these images “register,” or communicate through senses of touch and sound as well as through sight, demonstrate that family photographs function “as sites of *articulation* and *aspiration*” (Campt, 2012, 7 ; italics in the text) for individuals within these communities.

6. For a more extensive discussion of “communal truth” and Indigenous epistemology, see Sean Teuton, *Red Land, Red Power*, 26-7.

7. Peterson’s “*Storyteller* as Tribalography” summarizes the strong history of scholarship on this foundational text and the critical differences introduced in the new edition (such as an additional prefatory essay by Silko, changes in page orientation and size, and a revised collection of photographs). As Peterson notes, important early critical responses to *Storyteller* include Linda Danielson’s “*Storyteller*: Grandmother Spider’s Web” (1988) ; Bernard A. Hirsch’s “‘The Telling Which Continues’: Oral Tradition and the Written Word in Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Storyteller*” (1988) ; and Melody Graulich’s edited collection “*Yellow Woman*”: *Leslie Marmon Silko* (1993).

8. Rader notes that Silko has claimed “*Storyteller*” as her favorite story because with it she managed to render a land “alien” to her and “to get the interior landscapes of the characters” (Rader, 2011, 178).

9. Other photographs embedded in the book recall women whose lives provide alternate models for survival but would otherwise be forgotten, such as Juana, the Navajo woman who raised her grandfather Stagner. As Silko tells it, “when she had been just a little girl / Juana had been kidnapped by slavehunters / who attacked her family as they were traveling near Cubero” (84). Presumably sold to a Mexican or New Mexican family, she spoke only Spanish ; “no trace of her family remained.” (84) Silko remembers how she would go with her grandmother Lillie to put flowers on Juanita’s grave, thus demonstrating how Laguna women transform loss into embodied presence through “keep[ing] the stories for those who return / but more important / for the dear ones who do not come back” (239).

10. For more detailed analysis of this sequence, see Huhnsdorf, *Mapping the Americas*, Chapter 4, especially 152-4.

11. Another example is *In Mad Love and War* (1990), a collection that mixes her poetry with illustrations by Smith ; in this collaborative work, “the tribal motifs confirm the alliance forged between two artists with different tribal affiliations and their active, shared vision of how Indigenous identity is created.” See Rader, 2014, 305-6.

ABSTRACTS

This essay foregrounds Indigenous critical perspectives on the history of photography in the U. S. West. It considers how two Native writers, Leslie Silko and Joy Harjo, resist the settler-colonial narrative of “vanishing” Indians in their multigenre texts. By narrating the “fugitive poses” staged by white and Native photographers, Silko (Laguna Pueblo) and Harjo (Muscogee Creek) mobilize still images through time and space to generate open and flexible literary forms. Deploying what Gerald Vizenor calls “a tricky, visionary resistance,” they relocate their bodies

and their voices to the center of an ongoing process of native storytelling and thus reclaim the power of photographs to express and transform individual and communal identities.

Cet article s'intéresse aux points de vue critiques indigènes sur l'histoire de la photographie dans l'Ouest américain. Il met en lumière la façon dont deux écrivaines indiennes, Leslie Silko et Joy Harjo, s'opposent au récit colonialiste sur les Indiens « en voie de disparition » (*vanishing Indian*) dans leurs textes multigenres. En retraçant les « poses fugitives » mises en scène par des photographes blancs et indigènes, Silko (Laguna Pueblo) et Harjo (Muscogee Creek) rassemblent des images figées à travers le temps et l'espace pour créer des formes littéraires ouvertes et flexibles. Affichant « une résistance complexe et visionnaire », selon les termes de Gerald Vizenor, elles replacent leurs corps et leurs voix au centre d'un processus continu de récits autochtones, et se réapproprient ainsi le pouvoir de photographies qui expriment et transforment les identités individuelles et communautaires.

INDEX

Keywords: native photography, visual sovereignty, photo-poetics, Leslie Silko, storytelling, Joy Harjo

Mots-clés: photographie indigène, souveraineté visuelle, photo-poétique, Leslie Silko, récit, Joy Harjo

AUTHOR

AUDREY GOODMAN

Georgia State University