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**Towards the Poetics of Ceremony**  
A Study in Contemporary Native American Literature

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Prohlašuji, že jsem rigorózní práci vykonala samostatně s využitím uvedených pramenů a literatury.

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<i>Introduction</i> .....	6
<i>Literary Theory, Chopsticks and Rice</i> .....	6
<i>Ceremony: Indian or American?</i> .....	9
<i>Reading Ceremony</i> .....	11
<i>The Literature Statement</i> .....	13
<i>Chapter 1</i> .....	15
<i>The Ceremony of Language and Form</i> .....	15
1.1. <i>Folklore and Indian Literature</i> .....	15
1.2. <i>Ts'its'tsi'nako – Thought Woman</i> .....	19
<i>and the War Hero: Two Narrative Worlds</i> .....	19
1.3. <i>From the Indian to the Euro-American Discourse</i> .....	23
<i>Chapter 2</i> .....	32
<i>Ceremonial Symbols, Narrative Motifs</i> .....	32
<i>And the Characters In-between</i> .....	32
2.1. <i>(Pueblo) Indian Mythology and Symbolism</i> .....	32
2.2. <i>Tayo, Rain and Spotted Cattle,</i> .....	35
<i>The Essential from Ceremony's Symbols and Motifs</i> .....	35
2.3. <i>Women and Men of Ceremony</i> .....	39
2.4. <i>Borders and Border Crossings,</i> .....	45
<i>The Division of Literary Space</i> .....	45
<i>Chapter 3</i> .....	51
<i>Ceremony: Story as a Cure</i> .....	51
3.1. <i>Indian Ceremonies Today</i> .....	51

3.2. Sores and Wounds in Ceremony, .....	55
<i>Towards the Establishment of Meaning</i> .....	55
3.3. Story as a Cure .....	57
<b>Chapter 4</b> .....	<b>67</b>
<b><i>Ceremony Coming Full Circle</i></b> .....	<b>67</b>
4.1. <i>Within Or Beyond Literature,</i> .....	67
<i>The Problem of Literary Interpretation Scope</i> .....	67
4.2. <i>The Challenges of ‘the End’ of Ceremony</i> .....	69
4.3. <i>The Power and the Discourse</i> .....	75
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>79</b>
<b><i>American Studies and Literature:</i></b> .....	<b>79</b>
<i>Search for a Pattern</i> .....	79
<i>České resumé</i> .....	85
<i>Po stopách amerických indiánů trochu jinak...</i> .....	85
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	<b>93</b>

# Introduction

## Literary Theory, Chopsticks and Rice

There are several questions or problematic areas which one has to deal with when attempting to interpret a text which is usually referred to as “Native American Literature”, that is, its author is from a distinctive ethnic group and the fact is reflected, more or less, in his/her work as well as in its perception. In more general terms, I am facing the phenomenon of so called post-colonial, marginalized “other” or ethnic literature and the artistic expression within it as it has become the center of many contemporary, literary and non-literary debates.

Both in the literary theory and interpretative practice there are trends, certain tendencies, which may be understood as reflections of those discussions. Before placing *Ceremony*, and my interpretation of it, in their context, I would like to outline the basic concerns, concepts of, but also challenges to the post-modern theories and critical approaches. Starting with the very basic fact that literature is a form of sign and thus a part of linguistic communication, Roman Jakobson’s scheme is very useful to illustrate different possibilities and views that literary theory may acquire<sup>1</sup>. Literature is a process in which the addresser (or the author) is trying to deliver a message – by means of contact and certain code- to the addressee within a given context. In the course of time, different

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Selected Writings Of Roman Jakobson*, Vol. II *Word and Language*, Mouton de Gruyter, NY, 1985.

elements of this scheme were being emphasized or focused on (yet, this does not mean that other elements were ignored; they were perceived only from the perspective of the highlighted one). In a very simplified way one might say that, for example, Romanticism cherished the cult of the author whereas Realism was mainly concerned with the content of the message; or while the Formalist movement paid attention to the form of what was written, the emergence of de Saussure's theory shifted the emphasis towards the study of the literary 'code'.

Starting with the nineteen-sixties, different post- theories began to appear, re-defining or re-evaluating their "pre's". Post-structural critics radically changed the view of literature, inspiring new ways of reading and the interpretation of meaning. Following the Saussurian concept of sign they began to challenge the theory of literature-as-representation and explored literary texts as non-referential, linguistic constructs emphasizing, however, that the link between the signifier and the signified is not only arbitrary (as the structuralists pointed out) but also temporary, unstable and depending on a given social consensus and context. Sign was no more considered self-sufficient, but 'always determined within ideology and in relation to subjectivity'.<sup>2</sup> Whereas the former might have inspired feminist, cultural or post-colonial readings, the latter creates the starting point for psychologically- or reader-oriented theories. Usually, however, the two elements, ideology and subjectivity or experience, support and enhance each other. Looking back at Jakobson's scheme it seems that the contemporary discussions about ethnicity, cultural imperialism and binarism in literature arise from the fact that more than

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<sup>2</sup> *A Critical and Cultural Theory Reader*, ed. Easthope, A. (Buckingham, 1992)

before we began to perceive different parts of that scheme through the prism of the context (historical, political, cultural etc.).

However, it is important to realize that literary theory is always only a tool for our interpretation and it is equally important to acknowledge that no matter how complex and profound the theory might be, it is never a universal concept which would be applicable to all kinds of literary texts. There has been an expansion of different literary practices recently but we should note that those were often connected with or referred to individual literary texts or authors, and in this, I suppose, there is the possible challenge to not only post-structural, post-colonial, feminist or cultural, but generally all theories of literary criticism. This challenge is called limitation; the usage of each theoretical tool is restricted. Just like chopsticks, which are probably the best and most comfortable choice for a Chinese person who is eating his rice whereas to a European who had been served a pork chop they might seem highly impractical, the choice of a particular theory and its methods should be inspired both by “the dish” and the assessment of our capability to use the dining equipment. It is true that sometimes the use of chopsticks, in the European context, may bring on unexpected results, surprising achievements and enrichment to our experience of eating/reading the dish, but it is also possible, and I am afraid more likely too, that whatever it is we try to hold between the two sticks which is not suitable enough, it may soon find itself out of our reach entirely, its special taste never to be recognized.

Using this comparison, my last point brings me back to what I mentioned at the beginning: I am in front of an Indian dish. A Native American delicacy. But I am sitting

in a European restaurant, not in a teepee. Moreover, I do not know how to eat with chopsticks.

### ***Ceremony: Indian or American?***

I would like to mention another possible challenge or limitation of recent theories and that is assumptions. They are closely related to the phenomenon of stereotypes which I dealt with in the Preface. What I mean by ‘assumptions’ and, consequently, possible danger of stereotyping is that when we see a Chinese person we picture him/her eating rice with chopsticks. When we are served a Chinese dish, we are tempted to try the chopsticks too. Similarly, when there is an acclaimed female author she will almost certainly be quoted in some feminist reader to illustrate feminist criticism. If she is a native and female there is, apart from the feminist issue, ‘the prevailing popular assumption that she will in some isomorphic way “reflect” or “represent” the culture of her origin’<sup>3</sup>. This approach, I think, might sometimes result in similar misfortunes as the attempt to eat your steak with chopsticks.

*Ceremony*, however true the fact that it was written by an Indian, finds itself in some sort of a ‘third’ space, in-between two worlds: the Indian and the Anglo-American. As Andrew Wiget writes ‘*A Native American writer who approaches the creation of literature in bicultural terms finds herself caught up in the literary dimension of a historical dilemma in which each of the voices rising within her cancels the authority of*

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<sup>3</sup> Wiget, A.: *Identity, Voice, and Authority: Artist-Audience Relations in Native American Literature* in *World Literature Today*, Vol.66, No.2, Spring, 1992, pp.258-63.

*the other.*’ To escape the constraint of such cultural determinism it is either possible to choose to take up the marks of (the Indian) community identity (but this is still, in a way, a form of participation on the concept of “Indianness”, the stereotyping practice, which had been established in the literature which was *about* the Indian, such as Karl May’s) or, and this is the case of Silko, to write as a marginalized person on the one hand, but whose ethnicity is negotiated in a multivocal discourse on the other. Silko writes a story of an Indian but she manages to escape the “Euro-American versus Indian” binarism. She achieves this through the plurality of voices, forms, themes and motives. As the Navajo medicine man tells Tayo in the book: *‘Accidents happen, and there’s little we can do. But don’t be so quick to call something good or bad. There are balances and harmonies always shifting, always necessary to maintain...It is a matter of transitions, you see; the changing, the becoming must be cared for closely.’*

The answer for “is *Ceremony* Indian or American” is obvious: it is a wrong question to ask in the first place. It presupposes some typical ‘Indian’ discourse, which makes you use the chopsticks although no Chinese (rice) may be served. Leslie Silko is a mixed-blood Indian and at the same time, an American. To restrict her audience to the Native people only would be a mistake. The story is an essentially American experience; it is always a dialogue, always a struggle between two sides. The one wouldn’t exist without the other. Therefore, Silko’s story only makes sense when understood both as Indian and American.

## Reading *Ceremony*

My relation to literary theory, clearly, is pragmatic. I am going to use it as a tool which might help me to see and deal with different aspects of Silko's work. At the same time, there is no particular literary theory or type of criticism which I would give the privilege of use for my interpretation of the book. Rather, there are several theories which might be honored so. Structuralism, for example, is necessary to mention when describing Silko's notion of storytelling and the sense of 'a pattern' recurring in the novel. From the deconstructionist theories I am going to draw inspiration when commenting on the different contexts of the signifier, borrowing Michel Foucault's term *discourse* to describe the complex background of the two modes of Silko's narrative.<sup>4</sup> Reader-response criticism reflects the performative element of *Ceremony* best and feminist reading together with post-colonial theories might help me to deal with possible questions of power or ideology. Through this plurality, in terms of theoretical discourse, I hope to meet the needs of such a multivocal text as Silko's certainly is. My aim is not to discover Indianness for the European reader, not to urge using chopsticks in order to enjoy the Chinese food, my attempt is to read *Ceremony* in its plurality, to follow 'the

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<sup>4</sup> For within the human sciences this term is becoming extremely overloaded and thus likely to induce confusion, I am going to explain the meaning of 'discourse' as used in this treatise. Basically, I will use this term to analyze the narrative strategies to bring out the dynamics and rules governing the particular (social, psychological, and narrative) situation of Tayo in the novel. And because Tayo is always located in-between, in the middle of two different (social, psychological or narrative) situations, I will need to compare two different discourses: the European (or Euro-American) and the Native American. The closest synonyms for this understanding of discourse would then probably be 'background' or 'perspective' in the broadest sense of the word. 'Discourse' would stand for the historical, ideological, religious, social, in short, generally cultural aspects of the two entities and the representation they produce in the form of the two-sided narrative of *Ceremony*.

transition, the changing, the becoming' on its different levels and enjoy the meal as much as I can, thus encouraging others to have it too.

In the first part of my thesis I will deal with the linguistic and formal aspects of Silko's work. I am going to explain her use and understanding of language and how it is applied to the novel. At this point various terms, such as folklore (versus "literature") and the performative aspect of language or reading-as-experience will be discussed. In connection with the formal characteristics of her work, I would like to explore the so called *mediation*<sup>5</sup> or switching of codes which is how "the transition" operates on the level of different narrative forms.

The second "course offered" will focus on "the changing and becoming" within the content of the story, that is, I will try to trace the development of motives, symbols and thematic units. Among them, the land (as territory), water elements, the spotted cattle or women will be the most important ones. Building on this I will try to put the results of my exploration in the larger context of Tayo's quest. It will be necessary to define his 'transition' this time and deal with the phenomenon of the identity-search in the novel.

The last section of my thesis will concentrate on the solution that Silko provides us with at the end of her story. Based on the previous observation of changes or transitions on different narrative levels I will try to interpret Silko's conclusion within their context. One of the crucial questions to answer will be the matter of "the winner" in terms of the two discourses or perspectives, and the problem of the applicability of the meaning that *Ceremony* seems to offer.

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<sup>5</sup> Ruppert, J.: *Dialogism and Mediation in Leslie Silko's Ceremony*. In *The Explicator*, Vol. 51, No. 2, Winter, 1993, pp. 129-34

I shall finally describe the crucial, key-terms of the book, and summarize the main points of my interpretation. In the Conclusion to the study, I will expand on my theory and put it in the larger context of American Studies which should add another dimension to the meaning of the novel.

## **The Literature Statement**

There are basically four main sources for my thesis. Two of them are primary, Leslie Silko's texts, the rest are secondary sources about her work. Naturally, basic and crucial is *Ceremony* itself and I think it is not an over-statement if I metaphorically call it a Holy Script, the key text and starting point for everything I will describe and explore in my research. The second primary source, Silko's other novels, short stories, poems and letters are going to support my arguments if there is a need of additional back-up or explanation.

The secondary material mainly consists of various essays published both in the seventies, when *Ceremony* first appeared, and in recent time, focusing on different aspects of her work. There are two critical texts which were crucial for me when deciding on the specific topic of my thesis: Karen Wallace's *Liminality and Myth in Native American Fiction: Ceremony and The Ancient Child*<sup>6</sup> and James Ruppert's *Dialogism and Mediation in Leslie Silko's Ceremony*. Some of my thoughts may be inspired by those authors but at the same time I believe that I am going to find myself on virgin land where, putting my foot down, I will leave an evident print in its soil. Last but not least, there are

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<sup>6</sup> In American Indian Culture and Resource Journal, Vol. 20, No. 4, 1996, pp. 91-119.

the books on literary theory and criticism which were especially helpful for me when defining my position as the interpreter of Silko's novel. Selected bibliography related to *Ceremony* which I compiled from various resources (both on-line and printed material) and which, as far as I know, could be considered the most up-to-date one at the moment, can be found in the Bibliography section of this paper.

# Chapter 1

## The Ceremony of Language and Form

### 1.1. Folklore and Indian Literature

Before speaking about the language and form of *Ceremony* it is inevitable to devote some time to the notion of folklore and its relation to contemporary Indian literature as it provides the necessary background for the topic. Usually, folklore and literature are treated as two separate branches of humanities, stressing the difference between the anonymous/collective, traditional and derivative as opposed to the individual, original and creative. What are the main features of folklore-versus-literature then? Folklore are the traditional beliefs, myths, tales, and practices of a people, transmitted orally. Literature are the original tales and stories written down by an individual. In Andrew Wiget's words '*Folk artists were thought to be more authoritative, more authentic, more genuine, to the degree that their performances minimized variation. Elite artists, in precisely the opposite way, were considered more authoritative to the degree that they maximized variation to a condition approaching idiosyncrasy*'.<sup>7</sup> If a text or author was considered folk, usually there was the social role of the speaker as a sanctioned performer

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<sup>7</sup> Wiget, A.: *Identity, Voice and Authority: Artist-Audience Relations in Native American Literature*. In *World Literature Today*, Vol.66, No.2, Spring, 1992, pp.258-63

of the tradition considered as one of the most important features of the (folk) discourse. On the other hand, in case of literature which is free of ethnographic detail or

(the folklore) tradition, the focal point is not the social role of the speaker nor the extraliterary sources he (re)presents, but the text itself, its creativity and construction.

Nowadays, one can connect 'folk' with 'literature' mainly through terms like realism, naturalism or "ethnic" aspect in one's writing. What is being emphasized here is *the content* (ethnographic details, realistic setting or various elements of folklore being described in the work), what is being omitted, the *form* (the way how the traditional, mythic and collectively shared "oral" is being transformed into the unique and original creation of the "written"). Applied to the Indian literature, this distinction ceases to be useful. Contemporary authors work beyond these oppositions, rejecting the isolation of literature from folklore in the first place.

Why is that? In my opinion, one of the basic reasons is that whereas the Europeans began to use the written word, in contrast to the spoken, and call it literature, the Indians continued the oral tradition by *performing* their stories and myths in a way which is both close to folklore (in terms of its form) and to literature (in terms of its content). By virtue of this *absence* of the written word in the past, the contemporary Indian authors can only continue their "literary" tradition by incorporating the performative, folk element into the (European) literary form.

The second reason, and this brings me to the phenomenon of language, is the Indian understanding of stories which are *communicated* to people through the performance of language, in the speech act. In the Native American view, words create

reality and stories made of those words have then a greater reality than the ‘objective’ one. In a very straight-forward way, the theory of sign as adopted by the structuralist movement seems to be present here. What the Indians say about their stories resembles what we can read in the literary theory: The Saussurean perspective draws attention to the pre-existence of language. In the beginning was the word, and the word created the text. Instead of saying that an author’s language reflects reality, the structuralist argue that the structure of language produces “reality”.<sup>8</sup>

However, there is the social or communal aspect to the Indian understanding of a text or discourse. For structuralists, the reality of the text was the most important one and so was its function. The function, as well as the meaning, though, was to be thought of only in relation to and within the text itself, within the reality it construes, that is, *intraliterary*. The Indian people put emphasis both on the reality produced by the story and on the relation this reality had established with the objective one, provided there is an *extraliterary* function, too. ‘*In story reality, we assume an identity meaningful not only for ourselves, but also for the community that lives through the story*’.<sup>9</sup> Stories, in Laguna culture, bind people and the world together as a means of preserving life of the entire community. Considering the situation of the Indian community today and how it is being integrated into the (Euro-)American society, this gives another dimension to Silko’s work.

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<sup>8</sup> Selden, R.: *A Reader’s Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*, University Press of Kentucky, 1986

<sup>9</sup> Ruppert, J.: *Story Telling: The Fiction of Leslie Silko*. In *The Journal of Ethnic Studies*, Vol.9, No. 1, Spring, 1981, pp.53-8.

But yet another binary opposition seems to be dissolved at this point and that is the one of reality and myth. In the Indian perspective, myth is what shapes reality and gives it its meaning. To accept this assumption that individual life and reality has a meaning only as a part of a larger pattern is crucial for a better understanding of the form of *Ceremony*, or maybe for its understanding at all. For it is through the performative act of (telling) the *Ceremony* that Silko is taking the reader, parallel to the principal character, on a path which is marked by signs and symbols which gain their deeper meaning only within a larger scheme, that of a myth and tradition. This kind of 'initiation' is, again, closely connected to the Indian folklore, just as it is to the contemporary Native literature.

The last point I would like to make in regard to folklore and Indian literature is about the performative quality of Indian fiction, going hand in hand with the reader-response criticism. As one can read in Wiget's article '*Performance theory in folklore articulates well with reader-response approaches to literature because both invoke the rhetorical as well as the formal dimensions of speaking*'. Based on what I said about the function of stories and language in the previous paragraphs, *performance* can be understood as a means of disruption and distortion of the social construction of identity, of the socially established constructs and stereotypes, because it requires an active participation on the part of the audience in terms of various role-switching and experiencing both the identity features which were formerly highlighted and those formerly obscured or suppressed<sup>10</sup>. For the Indian author, consequently, this is an

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<sup>10</sup> This question of the 'highlighted' versus 'suppressed' could be also perceived in the works of the post-modern and feminist critics such as Judith Butler who is using the term 'bodies that matter' as opposed to the queer, non-standardized, off-center phenomena. She also discusses 'performance' in this connection – another topic worth further exploration.

excellent opportunity to mediate between the native and Euro-American reader, making them both participate in each other's worlds, dissolving the borderlines once set by the society and its stereotypes.

## 1.2. Ts'its'tsi'nako – Thought Woman and the War Hero: Two Narrative Worlds

I am now going to illustrate the previously explored theoretical concepts on the text of Leslie Silko's story, concentrating on the notion of the narrative forms and language. At the very beginning of the novel, almost like a Prologue, we read:

*Ts'its'tsi'nako, Thought Woman,  
is sitting in her room  
and whatever she thinks about  
appears.*

*She thought of her sisters,  
Nau'ts'ity'I and I'tets'ity'i  
And together they created the Universe  
this world  
and the four worlds below.*

*Thought-Woman, the spider,  
named things and  
as she named them  
they appeared.*

*She is sitting in her room  
thinking of a story now*

*I'm telling you the story  
she is thinking.*

(1)

Here, Silko is presenting a myth, the Indian-Laguna myth of creation. There is a clear relationship between thought and creation whose mediator is “naming”, that is, language, the performed word. By virtue of language different elements of that myth become reality. Reality, as is obvious from the end of the extract, is the story that the

narrative subject, *I*, is *telling*. As a consequence, the narrator herself becomes a sort of medium, providing for the words of the story. In the terms of traditional narratology, Silko assumes the third person position in her novel, more specifically, that of the “invisible” author whose voice is, with the exception of a few places, not “materialized” in the text, giving way to the characters on the scene to speak and explain for themselves. From the Indian perspective, the authorial voice is de-centered, localized somewhere in-between the world of myth and the world of the audience reading the story.

Further we read:

*What She Said:*  
*The only cure*  
*I know*  
*Is a good ceremony,*  
*That's what she said.*

(3)

It is obvious that the ceremony mentioned in the extract intermediately falls into a relationship with *Ceremony* – the book. It might be a simple trick which enables Silko to eat her cake and have it too, nevertheless, it is working: the reader is now aware of *Ceremony* being a part of the cure, of the story which means life and future for the whole community. It is clear that the story of Tayo which is basically “the content” of the novel, also has a meaning for the “universal” story of the Indian people and that is the performative and folk (referring to the Indian tradition) element of the text.

It is not only through the opening Indian narrative poem that the (European) reader is made conscious of a different discourse, there is also the explicit statement hinting at “the one” and “the other”, the we- versus –they opposition:

*Their evil is mighty  
But it can't stand up to our stories.  
So they try to destroy the stories  
Let the stories be confused or forgotten.*

...

(2)

The “communal” aspect of language is also illustrated here, stressing the shared quality of *our* stories which, if lost, would mean destruction of the community (‘Because we would be defenseless then,’ p.2).

After four distinctly “Indian” pages, though, a typically “European” narrative unwinds itself, a very contemporary voice as well, both in terms of the narrative strategy and the content. Suddenly, the world of the Indian myth disappears to be replaced by a rather confused and confusing story of Tayo whose state of mind is thus reflected in the form of the narrative, a very effective way of the Western-tradition literature to make the reader share the experience of its hero. What Silko needs, however, is the reader to get involved and recognize the *in-between* position of Tayo who, on the one hand, is this typical hero, a WWII vet, a member of the contemporary American society who suffers from the psychological disorder as a result of the war, but who, on the other, is a mixed-blood Laguna, a half-breed orphan whose very identity is challenged and questioned within the Indian community. And she found the solution for this in the combination of the two narrative forms or “languages” by establishing a kind of dialogue between the two discourses which James Ruppert<sup>11</sup> calls *mediation*.

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<sup>11</sup> Ruppert, J.: *Dialogism and Mediation in Leslie Silko's Ceremony*. In *The Explicator*, Vol. 51, No. 2, Winter, 1993, pp. 129-34

What characterizes the “native” discourse is: first, the form, that of a very simple narrative poem, often resembling a ritual by repetition of words or stanzas, second, the mythical background and connotations (Silko is incorporating different parts of the Laguna mythology into it, including that of a Hummingbird and Fly, a Corn Woman or the Ck’o’yo medicine man) and finally, the Indian vocabulary, usually occurring in the names of people, places and mythical figures. The “Euro-American” narrative can be described as a prosaic text in the center of which stands Tayo, the hero whose quest is being gradually revealed to the reader in the process of “experiential” reading, set in the nineteen seventies, in an Indian reservation of the South-East.

Examining the two forms a little more it works out, paradoxically, that poetry, a traditionally Western form of literary expression, actually carries the Laguna mythical discourse, whereas prose serves “the modern” topic of a veteran hero. One of the reasons I can think of is not only Silko’s attempt to mix the two discourses, but also to incorporate the performative, oral element to the story. Poetry is much closer to the oral performance, especially when resembling a ritual, and thus more suitable for this purpose than the prosaic lines. In terms of the two audiences, the Native audience must search for the context of the psychological, disjoint and disrupted narrative, whereas the non-Native reader is required to look for the context or possible link to the native discourse; to him/her the poetry is read, at least at first, as thematically separated from the prose. Ruppert sums up:

‘An ideological and epistemological translation must take place to create meaning from the various discourse elements present in the text. Both audiences must

begin a mediational process to appreciate a new discourse field, to change their sense of what is real and what is meaningful'<sup>12</sup>.

As the novel proceeds, the reader has to establish a relationship towards not just one, but both forms of the narrative, (s)he is asked to bridge the two so distinctly different discourses and merge the reality and myth within the story.

### 1.3. From the Indian to the Euro-American Discourse

To help this mediation, role-switching or merging on the part of the reader, Silko, “the performer”, employs the same strategy within the text: as soon as Tayo meets the Navajo medicine man, Indian myths and ceremonial/ritual discourse begin to appear in the prosaic text as one of its constitutive parts. Similar change or shift can be observed in the mythical discourse which is, on account of its gradually discovered parallel to Tayo’s story, moving closer to reality. Also, somewhere in the middle of the first half of the story, the Laguna veterans and their war stories are being told in a mythical way, raised out of the prose section to the poetry lines. Thus both the native and the non-native reader are made aware of the fact that myth and reality co-exist, interfuse and emerge from the same components:

*We went to this bar on 4<sup>th</sup> Ave, see,  
me and O'Shay, this crazy Irishman.  
We had a few drins, then I saw  
These two white women  
Sitting all alone.  
(...)  
He kept asking  
All mornig*

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<sup>12</sup> Ruppert, J. Ibid.

"Well? Well?"  
I told him  
"Well, I scored  
all right."  
"Which one?"  
"Not one," I said  
"Both of them!"  
(...)

"Shit, Chief,  
that's some reputation  
you're making for Mattuci!"  
"Goddamn," I said  
"Maybe next time  
I'll send him a bill!"

*Pinkie was holding his belly,  
laughing so hard. Leroy and Harley were slapping each other on the backs, laughing real loud.*

*"Hey, Emo, that's a good one!"  
"Hey, tell the one about the time that guy told on you."*

(57-59)

At this point it is necessary to explore the relationship between the Laguna myth and Tayo's story in greater depth. At the first sight, the two seem as rather independent, at best paralleled stories/discourses, one of which (always the 'strange' one to the non-Native reader) is possible almost to ignore or just skip briefly. Very soon, however, their interdependence is revealed and instead of a parallel or a side story, the idea of framing becomes more appropriate to describe the relationship. In her essay, *Liminality and Myth in Native American Fiction: Ceremony and The Ancient Child*<sup>13</sup>, Karen Wallace claims that:

'It is this synthesis that allows Silko ... to recontextualize the interstices of culture as liminal space. The stories are inseparable, yet remain distinct and parallel until the end, when Tayo's story enters the mythic framework, the very process reflecting Tayo's recovery. Silko reconstructs the protagonist's story in her vision of a native framework, as part of the Laguna worldview and experience.'

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<sup>13</sup> Wallace, K.L. in *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, vol.20, No.4, 1996, pp.91-119.

There are two important points in this statement. First, that the stories are inseparable, second, and this is actually what explains the former, that Tayo's recovery is only possible by his entering the mythic framework. Thereupon the whole meaning of *Ceremony* depends on the careful interpretation of the relationship between the two "stories". Similar hints can be found in the text:

*He wanted to yell at the medicine man, to yell the things the white doctors had yelled at him – that he had to think only of himself, and not about the others, that he would never get well as long as he used words like "we" and "us". But he had known the answer all along, even while the white doctors were telling him he could get well and he was trying to believe them: medicine didn't work that way, because the world didn't work that way. His sickness was only part of something larger, and his cure would be found only in something great and inclusive of everything.*

(125-6)

Clearly, the individual is opposed to the collective here, one's life contrasting the existence of a nation, of people. Moreover, the individualistic approach is connected with 'the white doctors' whereas community concern is the suggestive cure of the Navajo medicine man. A detailed analysis, however, will be dealt with at a more appropriate time, in connection with the notion of identity in the novel. To illustrate the cooperation and mutual support of the two narrative perspectives or forms I have developed a scheme in which it is possible to follow the way the myth enhances Tayo's ceremony (and its meaning) and vice versa:

## Ceremony

### The story of the Myth

### The story of Tayo's quest

Events/happenings	Extract	pp.	Events/happenings	Extract	pp.
The myth of creation (introduction to Ceremony)	<i>The only cure/I know/is a good ceremony,/that's what she said.</i>	1-2	Tayo sick in his head and body, unable to make sense of the world, past or present	<i>He had to keep busy; he had to keep moving so that the sinews connected behind his eyes did not slip loose and spin his eyes to the interior of his skull where the scenes waited for him.</i>	9
The myth of Reed and Corn Woman/ withdrawal of rain	<i>Corn Woman got tired of that/she got angry/she scolded her sister for bathing all day long. ...And there was no more rain then.</i>	13	The past: Tayo cursing the rain when Rocky got shot in the war. The present: pangs of remorse as a result of this	<i>He damned the rain until the words were a chant, and he sang it while he crawled through the mud to find the corporal... Whenever he looked, Tayo could see the consequences of his praying;</i>	12, 14
Neglect of the corn altar because of cheap magic tricks: rain taken away from the Indian people by Nau'ts'iy'i	<i>...they were/so busy playing around with that/ Ck'o'yo magic/ they neglected the mother corn altar...So she took the plants and grass from them. She took the rainclouds with her.</i>	46-49	The past: Josiah speaking about people who misbehave The present: Tayo realizing there is something wrong with the Indian veterans;  Emo's 'war' myths and trophies: Japanese soldier's teeth	<i>The old people used to say that droughts happen when people forget, when people misbehave... [Tayo:] "I don't know what it is, but I can feel it all around me." He poured the human teeth out on the table... They were his war souvenirs, the teeth he had knocked out of the corpse of a Japanese soldier. The night progresses according to that ritual...</i>	46  53  60, 61



Hummingbird and Fly seeing old Buzzard: asked to bring tobacco as part of their offering.	<i>"We need you to purify our town."/ "Well, look here. Your offering isn't/ complete. Where's the tobacco?"</i>	113	The past: Tayo's memories of his mother. The present: Tayo seeing Betonie at Gallup: Gallup Ceremonial contrasting Betonies 'new' ways.	<i>"It strikes me funny," the medicine man said, shaking his head, "people wondering why I live so close to this filthy town. But see, this Hogan was here first. Built long before the white people ever came. It is that town down there which is out of place. Not this old medicine man."</i>	109  118
ABSENCE (the myth entering the story of Tayo's quest)			Betonie telling the story of a 'bear child', a myth.	<i>He was a small child/ learning to get around/ by himself... They had to call him/step by step the medicine man/ brought the child back...but he wasn't quite the same/after that/not like other children.</i>	128-130
			Betonie performing the ceremony on Tayo.	<i>Following my footprints/walk home/following my footprints/Come home, happily/ return belonging to your home...</i>	143
Hummingbird and Fly looking for tobacco in the town, but there is none, so sent to ask caterpillar.	<i>But there was no tobacco/so Fly and Hummingbird had to fly/all the way back down/to the fourth world below/to ask our mother where/they could get some tobacco.</i>	151	Old Betonie's visionary dream: Tayo has to find the cattle, a woman and a mountain to complete his ceremony and be cured. Contrasting: the 'drinking' cure of other WWII vets, Leroy and Harley.	<i>"Remember these stars," he said. "I've seen them and I've seen the spotted cattle; I've seen a mountain and I've seen a woman. "We'll give you a cure! We know how, don't we?"... "Drink it! Drink it! It's good for you! You'll get better!..."</i>	152  158

The myth of the Ck'o'yo magician – gaining power over the people;	<i>He got power over them that way,/ and when they started gambling with him./ they did not stop until they lost/ everything they owned.</i>	171	Tayo set off to find the cattle, he meets the woman under the mountain and spends the night with her.	<i>He got up from the table and walked back through the rooms. He pushed the porch screen door wide open and looked up at the sky: Old Betonie's stars were</i>	176
Spiderwoman then giving medicine to the Sun Father to fetch the stormclouds back from him.	<i>"It won't be easy, Grandson, but here, take this medicine. ...</i>	173 – 176	Next morning, he greets the day with a song for the sunrise. Then he goes searching for the cattle.	<i>there....He watched her face, and her eyes never shifted; ...She unbuttoned his shirt.</i>	186
Everything happens as had been predicted by the Woman.	<i>It happened/just the way Spiderwoman said... "My children," he said/ I have found you!...Come home, children, come home."</i>		After a fight within himself, when he doubts the ceremony and himself, he manages to overcome the weakness and finally finds the lost cattle. With it, a feeling of belonging and understanding 'the larger pattern' Night Swan and Betonie were talking about.	<i>...but suddenly Betonie's vision was a story he could feel happening – from the stars and the woman, the mountain and the cattle would come. What ever made him thin he could do this? The woman under apricot tree meant nothing at all; it was al in his own head... all that was crazy, the kind of old-time superstition the teachers at Indian school used to warn him and Rocky about...</i>	194
				<i>Inside him the muddy water turmoil was settling to the bottom, and streaks of clarity were slowly emerging. Gathering the spotted cattle was only one color of sand falling from the fingertips; the design was still growing, but already long ago it had encircled him.</i>	196

The myth of the witchman: Ck'o'yo magic failing to work.	<i>"Something is wrong," he said./ "Ck'o'yo magic won't work / if somebody is watching us.</i>	247	Tayo witnessing the sacrifice of Harley, hidden in the old uranium mine. With each look he is coming closer to the completion of his (and the) C/ceremony, resisting the temptation to take part in the violence.	<i>The witchery had almost ended the story according to its plan; Tayo had almost jammed the screwdriver into Emo's skull...He would have been another victim, a drunk Indian war veteran settling an old feud; ...Big clouds covered the moon, but he could still see the stars... He would go back there now, where she had shown him the plant. ...The plants would grow there like the story, strong and translucent as the stars.</i>	253-254
Hummingbird and Fly fetching the tobacco for the Buzzard who then purifies the town. The stormclouds return.	<i>"Okay," Buzzard said/"Go back and tell them /I'll purify the town."/ And he did - ...The storm clouds returned/the grass and plants started growing again./ There was food/ and the people were happy again.</i>	255			
The end of the witchery myth.	<i>Whirling darkness/started its journey/with its witchery/and/the witchery/has returned upon it.// Its witchery/has returned/to its belly... It is dead for now. It is dead for now. It is dead for now. It is dead for now.</i>	260	Tayo is asked to tell the story to the old members of the tribe. Aunt finally accepts him as a full member of the family, old	<i>Auntie talked to him now the way she had talked to Robert and old grandma all those years, with an edge of accusation about to surface between her words. But after odl man Ku'oosh had come around, her eyes dropped from his face as if there were nothing left to watch for.</i>	259
The sunrise offering.	<i>Sunrise, accept this offering,/Sunrise</i>	262	Grandma notes on the world as an over and over repeated story.	<i>"It seems like I already heard these stories before...only thing is, the names sound different."</i>	260

Apparently, the old Pueblo myths and the “new” story of the contemporary Indian depend on each other. For the non-Indian reader, Tayo’s story often throws light on the myth and its meaning, for the contemporary Indian audience, the myth provides the

framework according to which Tayo's otherwise "WWII vet-story" acquires a new dimension of meaning. Both readings would be incomplete without the presence of each of the narrative forms, as would the meaning drawn from it.

What Wallace calls synthesis on the discursive level is synonymous to the phenomenon of change or transition which I am discussing in this treatise. The first chapter introduced this topic on the level of the narrative discourse, dealing especially with the form of Silko's narrative and its linguistic features. At the beginning of the book one faces two distinctively different forms of narrative, two different "languages". In the course of the novel, however, this is continually changing, as the two elements begin to create a kind of link between them. The dialogue or mediation takes place on the side of the reader, whose active participation is crucial for further and full understanding of the meaning, as well as in the text which is not just multivocal but also hybrid; it allows the two forms to intertwine. How significant, in terms of establishing the meaning, this fact is has been shown in the scheme. What other consequences it has, for example regarding the understanding of symbols in *Ceremony* or the meaning of Tayo's identity quest, will be entered on in the following chapters.

## Chapter 2

# Ceremonial Symbols, Narrative Motifs And the Characters In-between

### 2.1. (Pueblo) Indian Mythology and Symbolism

To be able to understand and interpret the motifs and symbols<sup>14</sup> in *Ceremony*, as well as put them in the right context of Tayo's story, a little survey to the Laguna Pueblo mythology seems a helpful idea. Laguna oral traditions figure as both text and pretext in the novel and, after all, Silko herself often states that the primary source of the traditional stories contained in her work is Laguna oral tradition.<sup>15</sup>

First of all, it is important to realize the *local* aspect of the Indian mythology; each Indian tribe or group of tribes sharing the same space shape their myths and stories according to their tribal (oral) history. Mythology is therefore a vital part of their culture and that is why *individual* features of those stories play such an important role. In a very basic way, myths thus serve as history books, preserving the collective memories. (The failure of 'white' scientists, historians and anthropologists, of the eighteenth and nineteenth century to recognize this aspect of the Indian stories resulted in the fact that

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<sup>14</sup> By means of this distinction I will then be able to describe the notion of transition in *Ceremony* on the level of narrative themes and topics. Whereas the term *motif*, in my interpretation, stands for a phenomenon or image which is recurring in the narrative and establishes one of the narrative's constitutive 'building' parts. *Symbol*, on the other hand, has more to do with the meaning rather than narrative strategy, establishing the basis for relevant interpretation. Put in the context of what has been said about Silko's two narrative perspectives, motif is more related to reality and symbol provides the link with the myth. About the relationship between the two, more will be said in the following paragraphs.

<sup>15</sup> This act of incorporating 'a clan-myth' into her story has provoked a critical debate; cf. Nelson, M.R.: *Rewriting Ethnography: The Embedded texts in Leslie Silko's Ceremony*. Accessible at <http://www.richmond.edu/~rnelson/ethnography.html>

‘what we know of Indian religions, of the myths they inspired and of the legends the Indians created around their semihistorical heroes, is fragmentary at best.’<sup>16</sup>). From the geographic perspective then, the Laguna Pueblo people can be found in the Southwest of the United States, in an area that stretches from Taos in north central New Mexico westward, to the Hopi mesas of northeastern Arizona.

The three most important figures in Pueblo mythology are Thought Woman (also Spider Woman, Grandmother Spider, Sister Spider, Ts’its’tsi’nako), Corn Mother (or Corn Woman) and Sun Father. Each of the figures has its own, characteristic meaning, but at the same time is linked to and interdependent of the other two.

Silko is introducing the characters at the very beginning of her novel, first speaking of the Thought Woman who is attributed with the creation of the universe:

(...)  
*She thought of her sisters,  
Nau’ts’ity’I and I’tcts’ity’I,  
and together they created the Universe  
this world  
and the four worlds below.*  
(1)

Silko is incorporating the Keresan myth here, probably following Elsie Clews Parsons’s transcription of part of the body of Laguna story published in 1928 in Boas’s Keresan Texts: *P’acaya’nyi, The Hummingbird, and Original Legend*.<sup>17</sup> Thought Woman is the source of names, language, and knowledge. She is at the beginning of everything as well as she is said to have “finished everything”. She is the matrix, the mother of all people.

Corn Mother/Woman is probably the most important deity in Pueblo mythology, judging

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<sup>16</sup> Marriott, A. – Rachlin, C.K.: *American Indian Mythology*. New American Library, New York, 1972.

<sup>17</sup> For a more detailed exploration of the relationship between Silko’s version of the myth and its sources, see Robert M. Nelson’s essay, *ibid.*

from the large number of ceremonies devoted to her. She is synonymous with Mother Earth, that is, represents life, growth and the feminine aspects of this world. The importance she has for the Pueblo people reflects the importance of corn as a staple crop of the Pueblo diet. Usually, when the ritual corn dance is being performed, it is for three major reasons: 1. to bring rain (and there is the connection to Tayo's story in which he curses the rain and then blames himself for the devastating draughts), 2. to increase fertility, or 3. to assure an abundance of crops. The only male figure in the sacred triangle is Sun Father who stands in opposition to Corn Mother. He is the most powerful creative force in the universe and represents masculinity and light (white color is associated with him). The interdependent relationship between him and Corn Woman is symbolized by cornmeal which is offered to him, his relation to Thought Woman is revealed in the myth of Ck'o'yo, the magician, who tricked people with his magic and took the storm clouds away from them. Sun father then went to Thought Woman, asking for help. She gave him a magic medicine that allowed him to trick the magician and free the clouds (in Silko's interpretation, she gave him a piece of advice). In *Ceremony*, Sun Father appears as "He" who is protecting the stories of his people:

*He rubbed his belly.  
I keep them here  
[he said]  
Here, put your hand on it  
See, it is moving.  
There is life here  
for the people.*

*And in the belly of this story  
the rituals and the ceremony  
are still growing.*

(2)

Before the prosaic text starts, the word *Sunrise* brings him back to one's mind. Moreover, Silko uses the same word to close the story, complete the C/ceremony and thus creates a circle suggesting the shape of ritual dances, again, a performative element smoothly embedded in the body of the narrative.

The last point I want to make in connection to Indian mythology and symbolism, is their belief in animal spirit guides. This belief has its ground in the Indian perception of nature. Nature, the land and all its objects are alive: they all have their spirits and so 'the awareness of the interrelatedness of man and nature permeates Native American literature'.<sup>18</sup> Animal spirit guides or helpers are then a fundamental part of Native American spirituality.

## **2.2. Tayo, Rain and Spotted Cattle, The Essential from Ceremony's Symbols and Motifs**

The same thing I intended to show on the level of language and the narrative forms (the transition, change, or movement from the supposedly Indian to the European discourse and vice versa) I will try to explore in this part, focusing on the constitutive parts of the two narrative perspectives: the motifs and symbols<sup>19</sup>. As I have explained

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<sup>18</sup> Schweningen, L.: *Writing Nature: Silko and Native Americans as Nature Writers*. In MELUS, Vol. 18, No. 2, Summer, 1993, pp. 47-60.

<sup>19</sup> It is only the most important, basic elements of the story that I choose to illustrate my theory. For further information and description of the topics, motifs and symbols, see, e.g.:

Henrici, A.: *The Ear For the Story and the Eye for the Pattern: Living And Reading Through Leslie Marmon Silko's Ceremony*. In *Literaria Pragensia*, Vol. 7, No. 14, 1997, pp.84-96.

above, whereas the motifs in *Ceremony* are typically related to the “real” world, that is, to the realistic narrative discourse telling the story of a war vet, symbols reach out into the mythical sphere, providing the ground for a more general, time-less interpretation.

The first motif and symbol I am going to deal with is rain. Reading the story of Tayo the reader challenges a disordered narrative that reflects the psychologically disordered state of his mind. Gradually, however, the (s)he comes to realize the reason of this distortion and its consequences:

*So he had prayed the rain away, and for the sixth year it was dry; the grass turned yellow and it did not grow. Wherever he looked, Tayo could see the consequences of his praying; the gray mule grew gaunt, and the goat and kid had to wander farther and farther each day to find weeds or dry shrubs to eat. (...) Tayo looked at the long white hairs growing out of the lips like antennas, and he got the choking in his throat again, and he cried for all of them, and for what he had done.*

(14)

To make the reader aware of the two narrative contexts, and thus, two different levels of meaning of rain, Silko puts the Indian myth of the Corn and Reed Women between the passage that describes Tayo’s damning the rain (which goes back to the past), and this passage shown, which is taking place in the present moment. It is a strategic step in terms of the reader because first, it helps him/her to grasp the meaning of Tayo’s prayer within the Indian context (‘Iktoa’ak’o’ya-Reed Woman/went away then/she went back/to the original place/down below.//And there was no more rain then,’ p.13), and second, it enhances Tayo’s feeling of guilt which, viewed from the European perspective, might not always seem rational or proper (‘The people and the animals/were thirsty./They were starving.’ p.14).

As a motif, rain is one of the numerous water-related phenomena in the story, such as river, water-supplies, storm clouds bearing the rain drops, snow or urine – the water of the body. Silko creates an unbelievably rich web of various motifs and she also manages to put them in relation to each other. Rain is thus related to nature, to land to which it is crucial. Land, subsequently, is a sacred matter, and the deity connected with it in the Indian mythology is the Corn Woman. Woman, or the female sex, is therefore often accompanying the water-symbols and motifs (as will become clear further in the chapter). On the one hand, this work with motifs produces a profound, complex and elaborate narrative structure, on the other, it reminds one of the perpetual re-telling of certain parts of the story suggesting a ritual, truly ceremonial character.

The symbolic function and meaning of rain (or its absence) is derived from the crucial position it has in the Indian mythology. For Tayo, rain represents the symbolic link to the Indian community which he disconnects by praying it away or, more generally, by taking part in the World War II in the first place. The absence of rain is thus paralleled with the absence of Tayo's identity, as he had stopped to remember stories and fails to produce words:

*For a long time he had been white smoke. He did not realize that until he left the hospital, because white smoke had no consciousness of itself. (...) The smoke had been dense; visions and memories of the past did not penetrate there, and he had drifted in colors of smoke, where there was no pain, only pale, pale gray of the north wall by his bed. Their medicine drained memory out of his thin arms and replaced it with a twilight cloud behind his eyes.*

(14-15)

The opposite image to rain here is the white smoke. Symbolically, it represents the world of the white people, white doctors (It is one of the rare examples when the image appears

only as uni-functional, as a symbol. It does not continuously appear further in the novel, it is not a part of the narrative web established by the motifs. Its function is purely symbolic.) In terms of modern psychology, Tayo probably suffers from “battle fatigue”, his silence and lack of self-awareness considered mere consequences of it. As soon as Silko uses the rain motif as a (mythical) symbol, however, this subconscious guilt is immediately put in the mythological context, offering a completely different and, with respect to the two discourses, also more relevant and valid interpretation.

Similarly, the spotted cattle. As a motif, it perfectly fits the logic and realism of Tayo’s story: Uncle Josiah decided to buy a strong breed of cattle which would be able to survive long periods of droughts. Tayo was helping him and promised to look after the cattle when his brother, Rocky, persuaded him to enter the war. While Tayo was in the war, Josiah died and so now he “*could cry for Josiah and the spotted cattle, all scattered now, all lost, sucked away in the dissolution that had taken everything from him*” (31). As soon as Tayo meets the Navajo medicine man who makes the cattle the subject of his ceremonial cure, however, the status of the animals as merely reappearing elements of the story changes. It is no longer one of the objects of Tayo’s narrative, of his memories and thoughts; it becomes a part of the ceremony, of the mythical healing process, and in the context of Tayo’s search for identity, the Mexican cattle come to symbolize the new identity of the Indian people. Although it has never been a traditional part of Pueblo mythology (the cattle as well as sheep and pigs came with the Spanish conquerors), Indians *accepted* it, or rather, took advantage of it as it *was* advantageous, and incorporated it into their culture. As Susan Blumenthal points out, ‘Silko created them to

represent the hybridization of Indian culture. (...) Even though the Native American culture in the Southwest often appears in the midst of cultural crisis, it endures and survives<sup>20</sup> – just like the cattle in the harsh conditions of the long lasting droughts. There is also the symbolic gesture regarding the future of the Indian people:

*He got up feeling happy and excited. He would take the cattle home again, and they would follow the plans Josiah had made and raise a new breed of cattle that could live in spite of drought and hard weather. (...) The barbed wire fence paralleled the rim, and he could see bits of belly hair the deer left on the barbed wire where their trails crossed the fence. Fences had never stopped the speckled cattle either, but there was no sigh they had been there.*

(187)

Shortly, just like the rain-as-a-symbol provided the large mythical background for the interpretation of the rain-as-a-motif, spotted cattle is crucial for understanding the meaning of Tayo's identity quest (the topic of identity will be discussed in the following chapter in detail). As you can see, the same "mediation" I described in the first chapter can be traced here, on the level of the narrative constituents.

### 2.3. Women and Men of Ceremony

It is unnecessary, for my purpose, to describe all characters in the story<sup>21</sup>. I will therefore choose only those figures which best represent the "meditative" aspect of the characters' nature, this being another example of Silko's transitional, syncretic practice.

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<sup>20</sup> Blumenthal, S.: *Spotted Cattle and Deer: Spirit Guides and Symbols of Endurance and Healing*. In *American Indian Quarterly*, Vol. XIV, No. 4, Fall, 1990, pp.367-77.

<sup>21</sup> The essay dealing with characters and themes in Ceremony can be found at <http://www.georgetown.edu/bassr/218/projects/reck/alr.htm>. Its author is Alexandra Reck from Georgetown University, Washington.

The subjects of my description will be Night Swan and Ts'eh for the feminine part, and Josiah and Betonie for the masculine.

For a better understanding of the role of women in the story, let me repeat that women hold the crucial position both in Pueblo mythology and the actual life.<sup>22</sup> Also, it might be proper to devote some time to the question of feminist criticism with regard to Silko's work at this point. Why haven't I chosen to interpret *Ceremony* as a feminist text? Certainly, the material is rich enough to provide suitable material for the exploration of the "feminist discourse". It might be said, even, that it provokes and encourages such interpretation. However, to me this would be, forgive me the old metaphor, like making one eat with chopsticks, just because the meal served happens to include rice. In my opinion, the "feminism" of *Ceremony* is only the result of the Indian perspective which Silko presents in the book, only a reflection of the Pueblo mythology in which Woman occupies the central space. I am convinced that the very presence and *effect* of the mythical discourse is far more relevant for the interpretation of the novel than the fact that women play the leading role in it. Therefore, I did not see reason enough to follow the feminist line, bearing in mind that rice is sometimes just a side-dish.

There are two women in *Ceremony* who function as a means for Tayo's mental return to the world, they show him the path he is supposed to go and help him to re-

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<sup>22</sup> The social organization of Pueblo Indians was traditionally based on matrilineal clan-system. Major features of social structure in the western pueblos emphasize matrilineal exogamous clans, the importance of women in the ownership of houses and garden plots, and matrilocal residence. For more, see: Swan, E.: *Feminine perspectives at Laguna Pueblo: Silko's Ceremony*. In *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, Vol. 11, No. 2, Fall, 1992, pp.309-28.

establish the link with his people and their history. The first of the two is Night Swan, a retired Mexican bar dancer from Cubero:

*She did not look old or young to him then; she was like the rain and the wind; age had no relation to her. She got up from the edge of the bed and hooked the screen door. She closed the door and pushed the bolt forward. The music had stopped, and there was only the sound of the storm. (...) Her sounds were gentle and the storm outside was loud. He could hear the rain rattling the roof and the sound fo the odl cottonwood tree straining in the wind.*

(99)

We can see her significance for Tayo on the sexual level: she introduces him into sexual life, but also on the symbolic level: she represents the mythical Woman and Mother, the feminine principle so strongly present in Pueblo culture. She is connected with the water-motifs as mentioned before, with the rain most importantly, and it is in the memories of her that Tayo can see a stable and therefore secure element which opposes his scattered identity and questionable social status after his coming back from the war. And she is close to him in another respect, too: she is Mexican, non-Indian, and so helps Tayo to understand why people look down on him because he isn't "pure":

*'They are afraid, Tayo. They feel something happening, they can see something happening around them, and it scares them. Indians or Mexicans or whites – most people are afraid of change. They think that if their children have the same color of skin, the same color of eyes, that nothing is changing. (100)*

With this speech she opens up a space which is going to be filled with Tayo's ceremony later in the novel. She predicts it as well, bidding Tayo to 'remember this day. You will recognize it later. You are part of it now.' (100) Some eighty pages later, Tayo together with the reader does remember – when he meets Ts'eh, the Indian Woman from Mount Taylor, the sacred mountain.

Whereas Night Swan stands even before the beginning of Tayo's journey, Ts'eh appears when Tayo is half way through already or, at least, is able to recognize some kind of pattern he has to fit and therefore obeys Betonie's command regarding the spotted cattle. Night Swan symbolizes the Mother, a woman who is at the beginning, who can teach and give advice for the future, Ts'eh, she is the Lover, a partner to help him along during his quest and life journey. At first, Tayo feels lost, lost in her as well as in all that she symbolizes:

*He was afraid of being lost, so he repeated trail marks to himself: this is my mouth tasting the salt of her brown breasts; this is my voice calling out to her. He eased himself deeper within her and felt the warmth close around him like river sand, softly giving way under foot, then closing firmly around the ankle in cloudy warm water.*

(181)

Instead of hearing the rain outside (as described when he was with Night Swan), Tayo becomes a part of the "river-sand" this time, he allows it to surround him and, finally, he finds out that 'he did not get lost, and he smiled at her as she held his hips and pulled him closer'. With Ts'eh, Tayo both managed to find the cattle and find himself and his memories. He comes back to the old stories, traditional myths of his people, and often thinks of the woman in connection with the sacred mountain she lives nearby. She 'had filled the hollow spaces with new dreams' (219) and with her, the recognition that 'nothing was ever lost as long as the love remained' (220) came to him.

Ts'eh is usually described by means of colors<sup>23</sup> and objects surrounding her; she refers to yellow, to snow or the water, to plants and seeds that she carefully collects, and to corn which, in the form of meal, she offers to Tayo on their first meeting:

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. Swan, E.: *Feminine Perspectives at Laguna Pueblo: Silko's Ceremony*. Ibid.

*She stepped out from under the tree then. She was wearing a man's skirt tucked into a yellow skirt that hung below her knees. Pale buckskin moccasins reached the edge of her skirt. The silver buttons up the side of each moccasin had rainbirds carved on them. She wasn't much older than he was, but she wore her hair long, like the old women did, pinned back in a knot.*

(177)

Obviously, she mirrors Ts'its'tsi'nako from the myth that provides the framework for the story. Both with her name and the motifs attributed to her. And it is another level on which Silko introduces the merging of myth and reality. The reader can never be sure if Ts'eh is a real person or just a mythical figure which crossed the border between the poetry and prose lines.

No such ambiguity surrounds the character of Josiah, Tayo's uncle. He perfectly fits in the social context of a typical Pueblo Indian reality, his role being, as Edith Swan describes in *Laguna Prototypes of Manhood*<sup>24</sup>, to function as an adult male model teaching his nephew masculine tasks pertaining to livestock, horsemanship and hunting. Silko bridges the contrast between the European and Indian sociological model by omitting the existence of Tayo's biological father in the first place. Similarly, the crucial role of the mother-clan is weakened as Tayo's mother disappears and he is never fully accepted into his aunt's family. Josiah is therefore the crucial figure that had been shaping his identity and thoughts. In his memories, Josiah is connected with stories, or generally, with language and speech as they are the fundamental faculties in Laguna percepts.

Through remembering what his uncle said or what he did, Tayo's troubled mind is

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<sup>24</sup> In MELUS, Vol. 17, No. 1, Spring, 1991-1992, pp. 39-61. She further explains that, traditionally, within matrilineal cultures, the extended family forms a household based on the corporate kinline through women: it consists of a mother (this role, in Tayo's case is performed by his Grandmother), her spouse and her daughters (Auntie and Sis), their inmarrying husbands (Robert) who move to the wife's residence, and finally of their unwed brothers (Josiah) and children (Rocky, Tayo). Surprisingly, it is the uncle who has authority over his sister's children rather than his own biological offspring, who in turn belong to the clan of his wife.

gradually healing from the sickening emptiness. The memories of Josiah are able to overcome the gap between the past and the present and thus let “the story” of life continue. Josiah’s emblem is the spotted cattle: he was the first to tell and show Tayo what breed of animals to look for, in other words, what identity to acquire to be able to survive. Through the ceremony, then, Josiah also becomes a part of the mythical narrative as his “legacy” is turned into the symbol of the cattle.

After Josiah’s death, two men take his place: Robert, who assists Tayo in his search for the cattle, and Betonie, the Navajo, whom Tayo meets at Gallop. Betonie and Night Swan have a lot in common: first, they have some Mexican blood in them which brings them close to the hero, second, they are able to recognize the larger pattern that Tayo has yet to discover through his ceremony, third, they have similar opinions on the present state of the Indian people. Betonie is a typical Indian traditional figure, that of a medicine man, but unlike most of his people, he can see that the solution is not in the *preservation*, but in the *adjustments* and certain *openness* of the old customs. His speech is like a meta-comment on *Ceremony*:

*But after the white people came, elements in this world began to shift; and it became necessary to create new ceremonies. I have made changes in the rituals. The people mistrust this greatly, but only this growth keeps the ceremonies strong. (...) things which don't shift and grow are dead things.*

(126)

He is the mediator of new Indian wisdom to Tayo, and he functions as a narrative help for the reader as well. Just like he reveals the ceremony that helps Tayo in his identity-search,

he defines the narrative lines according to which the reader can find the meaning of the novel. Unlike Josiah, who is a very realistic figure at the beginning but becomes part of the mythical discourse towards the end, Betonie could be perceived the other way round: as a presumably mythical figure (and a traditional part of the Indian religious system, too) who turns out to be a very contemporary man responding to the present needs of his people.

## **2.4. Borders and Border Crossings, The Division of Literary Space**

I have given the examples of transition among the motifs and symbols as well as characters in *Ceremony*. There is still one more element on the level of the narrative themes, though, that I haven't discussed so far, at least not in much detail: the land. Land is a very general term sheltering the more specific ones, such as nature, territory or living space. Commonly, the space of a novel would be treated as particular "setting" which provides background, more or less important, for the characters of the story.

Nevertheless, in case of the Indian novel, this approach is insufficient. Land or earth are the focal points in all Indian cultures. It is one of the strongest features, after all, that has defined the Indian in the Western eyes, one that has been constantly portrayed not only in literature, but also in other kinds of media, producing the "Ecological Indian" stereotype. In literary criticism, the term *nature writer* is usually applied to him/her who 'sees the environment as a scientist but who describes it as a humanist ... For these writers, reality

is quite as likely as fantasy to provide powerful aesthetic and emotional experiences.<sup>25</sup>

How true is this statement, as far as *Ceremony* is concerned?

My answer is: very true. The perception of nature and the awareness of different territories and the boundaries within them is another tool that Silko uses to support the Indian narrative situs in the prosaic text. Still, I prefer not to use the term “nature writer”. First, it would put *Ceremony* in a box in which it certainly does not belong (as nature is one of the crucial, but still not the most important topic), and second, it would restrict the complex land phenomenon to one of its aspects only. What I am going to explore now is the way this complex feature of her book participates in the central narrative strategy which is that of combination, merging and transition of the realistic/European and mythical/Indian discourses.

The title of this chapter bears the name of “borders”, and their crossings. What I am hinting at here is that in a metaphorical sense the body of Silko’s novel is a landscape. The territories in it are either white, or Indian, or, at some points, the border line is blurry, the zone hosts both the European and the Indian discourses. In the actual sense, too, Silko reflects this model. The characters participate in the “white” world/zone, the “Indian” zone, or in-between (as I have shown above). Rocky, for example, is willingly pushing himself towards the white territory (he goes to the war) and also the white way of life and thinking:

*He was an A-student and all-state in football and track. He had to win; he said he was always going to win. So he listened to his teachers, and he listened to the coach. ... Rocky understood what he had*

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<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Schweninger, L.: *Writing Nature: Silko and Native Americans as Nature Writers*. Ibid.

*to do to win in the white outside world. (...) He was becoming what she had always wanted: someone who could not only make sense of the outside world but become part of it.*

(51, 76)

Grandma, on the other hand, would always keep to the old, Indian ways, never leaving her Indian space on the reservation. That is why the two often oppose each other, like two armies defending their land. Obviously, territory and identity enhance each other similarly to how belonging to a state defines one's nationality. There is one factor, however, that can radically change the border lines: war. There was the war between the Europeans and the Indians which gave a new shape to the land division, and there was the war the Americans led against their enemies in the WWII. The "border crossings" in *Ceremony* are either the result of the former, or the latter.

The native American people, in order to survive, had to let go of their original land, had to give up their frontiers. That was the result of the long lasting war that the white man had won, eventually. What they had to keep, though, to maintain their identity, was their spiritual link to the land, which was crucial in their relationship to the phenomenon. In other words, while they were removed from their land (and thus crossed the borders) physically, they remained on their territory with their minds and thoughts. Their myth of the land has not been touched. Silko is stressing through Betonie, and the place he occupies:

*Old Betonie's place looked down on all of it; ... He turned and pointed to the city dump east of the ceremonial grounds and rodeo chutes. They keep us on the north side of the railroad tracks, next to the river and their dump. Where none of them want to live." He laughed. "They don't understand. We know these hills, and we are comfortable here. It had a different meaning – not the comfort of big houses or rich food or even clean streets, but the comfort of belonging with the land, and the peace of being with these hills.*

(117)

Also, it is easy to tell from this example, that the mediation of language (the word *comfort* and its meaning in the two contexts) runs in parallel to the territorial transition. The same motif of change or shift is then repeated when Betonie's "new ceremonies" are being described, containing new, "white" elements, such as phone books or calendars. All this symbolizes the crossing, the necessary change of borderlines, and the inevitable merging of the two perspectives.

Things are different with the Indian war veterans, though. Formerly, they were "typical" Native Americans – deprived of most of their land but still keeping their identity. Since the War, though, a different kind of 'crossing' and give-up has been required:

*"America! America!" he sang, "God shed his grace on thee."  
He stopped and pulled a beer away from Harley.  
"One time there were these Indians, see. They put on uniforms, cut their hair. They went off to a big war. They had a real good time too. Bars served them booze, old white ladies on the street smiled at them. At Indians, remember that, because that's all they were. Indians. These Indians fucked white women, they had as much as they wanted too. They were MacArthur's boys; white whores took their money same as anyone. These Indians got treated the same as anyone. ...No. I didn't finish the story yet. See these dumb Indians thought these good times would last. They didn't ever want to give up the cold beer and the blond cunt. Hell no! They were America the Beautiful too, this was the land of the free just like teachers said in school. They had the uniform and they didn't look different no more. They got respect. ...I'm half-breed. I'll be the first to say it. I'll speak for both sides...The war was over, the uniform was gone. All of a sudden that man at the store waits on you last, makes you wait until all the white people bought what they wanted...God damn it! You stupid sonofabitches! You know! "*

(41-2)

This kind of crossing involves a mental change as well. For it is not about the land in the physical sense only, it is also about the relationship to it and therefore it affects the Indian identity. Indian soldiers have suddenly found themselves on the "white land" and were treated as white, too. Whereas before, the home country was Indian and going abroad meant America, now America has opened its borders, offering a new, and certainly more advantageous perspective. This "visa", however, is only temporal and for the veterans

like Tayo, Emo or Harley, the realization of this means to look for a new zone, new life space, or re-discover the old one. Tayo's geographical journey, again, parallels his spiritual one, the ceremony. He is moving from the white hospital to his homeland, where he perceives himself invisible. It is only after his gradual understanding of the land, the physical landscape, that he can revive the psychological link, and thus, his Indian identity (but this will be dealt with profoundly in the following chapter). Looking for the spotted cattle at the sacred mountain, he becomes sensitive to the land and nature around him, recognizing a pattern which is 'beyond' the reality, that is, the myth:

*He leaned close to the earth and sprinkled pinches of yellow pollen into the four foot-prints. Mountain lion, the hunter. Mountain lion, the hunter's helper. ... Inside hi the muddy water turmoil was settling to the bottom, and streaks of clarity were slowly emerging. Gathering the spotted cattle was only one color of sand falling from the fingertips; the design was still growing, but already long ago it had encircled him.*

(196)

We could perceive Tayo as a mediator then, too. He has crossed several borderlines, but finally, came back "home". Karen Wallace says: 'In light of the implicit refusal or even inability of many Indian people to participate off-reservation, Tayo and Betonie, 'threshold people', are powerful and essential to their communities as they mediate between cultures. They transform the margins into powerful space, allowing for a self-awareness from which Indians may assert themselves.'<sup>26</sup>

I assume it has become clear by now that different elements of Silko's narrative, such as language, symbols and motifs, as well as characters and the phenomenon of land have something in common, something that functions as their structuring principle.

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<sup>26</sup> Wallace, K.: *Liminality and Myth in Native American Fiction: Ceremony and The Ancient Child*. Ibid.

Different authors use various terms, be it mediation, liminality or merging, but to me they all mean the same: in short, the switching between (the Western and Indian) codes and perspectives Silko operates with in order to reach a meaning which would be aware of and constituted by both. This “gesture”<sup>27</sup> of the author, or strategy she employs to establish the meaning will be dealt with in the next chapter which is going to provide a wider perspective of the purpose(s) of C/ceremony.

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. Mukařovský, J.: *Studie*. Host, Brno, 2000; and Jankovič, M.: *Nesamozřejmost smyslu*. ČS, Praha, 1991.

## Chapter 3

### Ceremony: Story as a Cure

#### 3.1. Indian Ceremonies Today

The question to be answered at this point is what is *ceremony* and what purpose (s) did it and does it have in Indian lives. The word comes from Latin *caerimōnia* which means religious rite and established itself in Middle English as *ceremonie* with fairly the same meaning. In the course of time, however, the Western world shifted the meaning from its formerly exquisite religious context towards a more general one, stressing certain formality of the act, conventionality and social nature of it. Ceremony can be a wedding as well as shaking hands or a welcome of a distinguished figure. To the Western eye and ear, although there are some remains of the formerly sacred nature of the word which can be observed for example in the respect or etiquette-status that the rituals in various situations acquire, *ceremony* has lost its religious importance and connotations. For the Indian senses, however, this aspect seems still alive.

It is surprising that, as far as I know, nobody has been dealing with the concept of Indian ceremonies (as opposed to the Western or European) in connection with Silko's masterpiece. Still, ceremony is at the very 'heart of the matter' and the meaning of the book, obviously, and cannot be fully grasped without realizing the status of ceremony for the Indian people both in the past and today. Often times, rather than *religion* which

sounds too Western and echoes with Christianity, the term *beliefs* seems to be more appropriate to describe the system of Indian ceremonies and rituals. Put in a very simple way, Indian people believe in spirits, in the sacredness of certain places, objects or events. Ceremonies then are the means of *performing* those beliefs outwardly; one might also say that this is the Indian way of the religious *practice*, similar to the white people who go to church on Sundays. Nevertheless, there is a slight difference: Christianity is based on the presumption that (one) God is ruling the universe and it is His will that decides what is going to happen both to the individual and to the people in general. Yes, people ought to pray, but only God Himself decides about the future. The Indian view of the creation of the world was described at the beginning of this paper and so was their relationship towards animals and land as spiritual objects. Indians seem to be much more active in their religious ways and also, they perceive the world, the reality around them, from a much more spiritual perspective. What has to be pointed out is the *reciprocal* relationships between the Pueblo people and their deities (because there are different mythological figures for different fields of human activity, not just one). In Austgen's words, 'if the ceremonial offerings are done properly, then their needs are met. If they are not properly carried out, then the people are not fully cared for...'<sup>28</sup> A simple, fair deal.

The central elements in any ceremony are words, dance and music. Dancing or signing are performances per se. From what had been said about the power of words (it is through them that reality is being created) it must be clear that speech is also understood as a performative act and therefore cannot be omitted in the event. The purpose, form and

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<sup>28</sup> Austgen, S. M. : *Leslie Marmon Silko's Ceremony and the Effects of White Contact on Pueblo Myth and Ritual*. Ibid.

content of traditional ceremonies are given. From generation to generation the rules of each particular ceremony were being transferred and preserved. “The proper” carry-out of the ritual means the meeting of the needs and goals of it, as we read in Austgen. Has it always been possible, though, to perform ceremonies “properly”, according to the ancient tradition? And what can be said about it in the present?

There are many examples in history when the occasions to carry out ceremonies, let alone properly, were scarce or none. Ceremonies were officially prohibited and Indians deprived of the possibility “to do their part of the deal”. Surely, such situation affects both individuals and the whole Indian community as it not only brings on shortage of various kinds (from the Indian point of view) but it also threatens the very roots of the tribal identity.<sup>29</sup> Today, no legal restrictions exist to jeopardize Indian religious practices and various forms of rituals and ceremonies are regularly being performed including the Fire, the Corn or the Sun Dance Ceremonies. There is the other side to the fact, though, that those ceremonies are often part of white tourism which is one of the great money resources for contemporary Indian people who live on reservations, presumably keeping “the old ways”. The question then arises: are they *really* ceremonies – in the traditional Indian sense? Do they still have a meaning for the Indians, or are they performed for the whites’ (and eventually, money-) sake only?

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<sup>29</sup> Multiple examples of the Indian struggle against the ‘white’ law which prevented them from practicing their religion, and thus was in conflict with basic human rights, can be found throughout history. The best known, probably, is the massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890, which was in part the result of the growing support of the Ghost Dance religion. Founded by Wovoka, a Paiute Indian religious leader, the religion rapidly gained many followers through the Plains Indians. The belief of the Ghost Dance religion was a hope to return to the ‘old ways’. For resources, visit e.g. <http://www.ibiscom.com/knee.htm>

Silko, I think, offers an answer. Ceremonies, in order to survive, have to be different from what they ‘traditionally’ used to be. In the novel, Betonie’s ceremony and his understanding of it opposes the Gallup Ceremonial as described below:

*Every year it was organized by the white men there, Turpen, Foutz, Kennedy, and the mayor. Dance groups from the Pueblos were paid to come; they got Plains hoop dancers, and flying-pole dancers from northern Mexico. They organized an all-Indian rodeo and horse races. And the people came, from all the reservations nearby, and some came from farther away; they brought their things to sell to the tourists, and they brought things to trade with each other: white deerhides, and feathers, and dried meat or piki bread. The tourists got what they wanted;*

(116)

What happens is that the old, supposedly unchanged ceremonies begin to serve as a spectacle for the white audience. Their religious purpose is changed into economic necessity. However, it is the old outside *form* of the ritual only which is being “sold” as an attraction. The traditional meaning and content, the words and stories of the myth, they manage to survive – at least by people like Betonie whose ways have changed, but not so his thoughts and feelings (the same is true about his relationship to land described in the previous chapter). As Silko writes, *in the belly of this story / the rituals and the ceremony / are still growing* (p.2). Although it is in the new ‘Western’ (written) form, the traditional meaning of ceremony is being performed, revived, and the old myth perpetuated within it.

Something had to be given up, something new accepted, but this is exactly what the Indian understanding of life and tradition should be like, according to Silko. This is the transition which runs throughout *Ceremony* like a thin red line, merging the old myths with the new reality, showing the possible Indian path for the future and healing – through stories – the aching wounds of the Indian identity on the way.

### 3.2. Sores and Wounds in Ceremony, Towards the Establishment of Meaning

Beginning with this chapter, my question should shift from *how* and *what* in the novel to *why* and to *what purpose*. So far, I have devoted my time to the topics of “how is *Ceremony* written” (that is, what are the features of its language and narrative form) in the first chapter, and “what are its main constitutive parts” (in terms of the narrative themes and strategy), in the second. Focusing on the transitory element which is being repeated on each of the levels I am now moving towards the field of meaning-establishment in *Ceremony*. In post-structuralist terms, “the play” between the signifiers which establishes the meaning is going to be my focal point. Before discussing the answers that *Ceremony* offers through this process, though, it seems logical to introduce the questions. What is then *Ceremony* trying to cure? What is the illness for which it offers its medicine?

Probably the most commonly used word repeated in various pieces of criticism regarding Silko’s novel is that of *identity*. The story of Tayo is the story of his identity quest. *Ceremony* both tells the story and provides means to achieve his goal. Identity, however, is not a sufficient answer to *why* in the novel. It consists of several layers, several wounds that must be healed in order to Tayo’s full recovery. My diagnosis would thus include:

- Tayo, a half-breed orphan; personal identity problem
- Tayo, an Indian WWII Veteran; generation identity problem
- Tayo, a member of the Indian society; ethnic/communal identity problem.

The symptoms related with each of the wounds are:

- Tayo's position in the family of his mother's sister and consequently, the difference between him and Rocky, the role of Josiah as both father and mother, disadvantage among other, "pure" Indian people
- Psychological disorder as a result of the war and the treatment of the Indians after the war, drinking for comfort, attempts to forget or revive the past so as to avoid thinking about the present
- Clash between the Indian understanding of time, stories or rituals and the white's view of it, the opposition between the logic and the irrational, the reason and the feeling, the relationship between an individual and land/environment

To provide a cure for the first, personal wound, means to explore Tayo's immediate environment, his childhood and relationship to the family members. The second medicine must bridge the gap in time and open new horizons. The last and most complex of the sores shall be healed by mediation between the European and Indian discourses, by their settlement and dialogue. The key words for Tayo's identity quest then are the family and the Indian community, time and general perception of the world. Similarly to all the previously discussed elements or levels of *Ceremony*, the basic substance of all three "medicines" is crossing between two poles, dissolving the sharp edges of two sides and, consequently, mediation in-between. The purpose of *Ceremony* or the answer to my *why* can be therefore seen in three different contexts, all of which are interrelated, though, and function only as a whole. This mutual dependence of all the levels is, I think, the "cure"

the story is offering to the reader; it is his/her task to accept it and –gradually watching its effects – make sense of the book as a whole.

### 3.3. Story as a Cure

I shall now speak of Tayo’s story in terms of the healing process discussed in the previous section. Tracing the symptoms and unmasking the wounds, I am going to follow each layer of his identity quest in greater depth.

The place Tayo occupies in his Auntie’s family is best described in the following passage:

*But Auntie stared at him the way she always had, reaching inside him with her eyes, calling up the past as if it were his future too, as if things would always be the same for him. They both knew then she would keep him and take care of him all the months he would lie in a bed too weak to walk. This time she would keep him because he was all she had left. Many years ago she had taken him to conceal the shame of her younger sister.*

(29)

All aspects of him as a half-breed and orphan are being revealed here: first, he can never escape ‘the faith’ of being an outsider- this label was stuck to him the day he was born and even more so, the day he was carried to Auntie’s house. Second, as a child of Auntie’s sister, he would always be taken care of but also looked upon with shame and feeling of disgrace that his mother had brought on the family. Third, he would always be compared to the ‘right’ child, Rocky, and after his death counted as “all she (aunt) had left”.

The relationship between Tayo and Rocky is twofold: on the one hand, they treat each other as brothers and respect each other accordingly, on the other hand, when Rocky's mother is present, this familiarity must be concealed and Tayo put in the place of the outsider, as Auntie, the ruler of the house, requires. The same ambiguity occurs in Auntie's approach to Tayo: when other members of the family are present, she pretends to treat him the same as she treats Rocky, but they both know it is only temporary. *"It was a private understanding between the two of them...She wanted him close enough to feel excluded, to be aware of the distance between them [Rocky and Tayo]"* (p.66-7). Paradoxically, through this 'outsider' obstacle, Tayo learns to understand his aunt very well, being able to tell any shift in her mood and the slightest movement of her mind. In a way, they were similar: Tayo trapped in-between two worlds, Auntie caught up in the past when the clan name and reputation meant everything within a community:

*So Auntie had tried desperately to reconcile the family with the people; the old instinct had always been to gather the feelings and opinions that were scattered through the village, to gather them like willow twigs and tie them into a single prayer bundle that would bring peace to all of them. But now the feelings were twisted, tangled roots, and all the names for the source of this growth were buried under English words, out of reach.*

(69)

Tayo symbolizes the outcome of the European intrusion which "contaminated" his mother, the Little Sister who broke away from her home and the people. She had crossed the border between the Indian and the white world and she stands at the beginning of the "liminality" which shapes the whole *Ceremony*: *The feelings of shame, at her own people and at the white people, grew inside her, side by side like monstrous twins that would have to be left in the hills to die...; what happened to the girl did not happen to her alone,*

*it happened to all of them* (p.69). Tayo as a son of hers carries on the burden of split personality. And in his aunt's family he is made aware of it from the very beginning.

Tayo's step-brother, Rocky, is also a hybrid phenomenon. His "contamination" with the white world is of a different kind, though. Whereas Tayo is born half white and cannot change the fact that however Indian inside, he will always be considered an outsider, Rocky is full-blood, but still chooses not to be part of the Indian world. Surprisingly, Auntie welcomes the attitude of her son considering it the only way an Indian can succeed in the white world, but at the same time, she cannot accept Tayo's position in the first place, he is the threat, the change that endangers the vulnerable Indian culture and (her) attempts to preserve it. The result of this "Rocky-is-right/Tayo-is-wrong" atmosphere in the family after Rocky's death brings on the feeling inside Tayo that there has been 'an accident of time and space'. During the ceremony, Tayo has to challenge this "accident", he has to overcome the myth of his heroic, all-American brother (whom Silko lets die, certainly not accidentally, in a completely strange country, among the white troops, fighting "the white man's war") – the myth that denies Indian traditions and looks down at old rituals and ways of thinking – and show his aunt as well as all her people that however an outsider, he can think of a new possible way of survival (different from that of Rocky which could, symbolically, lead to death of the Indian culture).

Another layer of Tayo's identity illness bears on the war and the generation of Indians it affected. Partially, this problem has already been dealt with in the second chapter, but let me summarize the main aspects of it with regard to Tayo's quest. The two

sides Silko draws attention to here are “the old” Indian people who are no longer able to establish a link to their sons returned from the war and “the young” ones who no longer wish to have such a link established. Naturally, the result of this is separation of the two. Tayo, at the beginning of his story, falls into the “vet- group”: he is mysteriously sick and he is not fully conscious of reality, just like many of his fellows. At the same time, however, he is not strong enough to go and solve the “battle fatigue” in the bars like his pals. Physically, he has to stay among “the old folks” and through this physical presence he is gradually gaining attention of the people (Grandma, old Ku’oosh, Robert), establishing the link to their tradition, forgetting what the white doctors urged him to do (‘No Indian medicine.’) and think.

Tayo’s friends, Harley, Leroy and other Indian vets, Emo and Pinkie, listened to what the white people said, listened to it before the war and believed it after the war as well. The chasm between the past and the present, between the promises and reality in which they found themselves after the war, however, has to be overcome somehow. And as long as “the Indian medicine” is forbidden, beer is a good substitute. Helen Jean, an Indian girl who in a way parallels Tayo being somewhere in-between the two worlds and resembling the fate of his mother, provides an opinion of the same, but female generation:

*She looked at these Laguna guys. They had been treated first class once, with their uniforms. As long as there had been a war and the white people were afraid of the Japs and Hitler. But these Indians got fooled when they thought it would last. She was tired of pretending with them, tired of making believe it had lasted.*

(165-6)

Again, it is the woman who has some insight, although she has also been separated from the tradition. Her separation is more physical than spiritual, though, as no alternative has

ever been offered to her (unlike the men). It is not only alcohol that substitutes the hope; Harley and Leroy are in love with machines, with cars. Driving a truck on the highway, good supplies of beer or wine at hand and six-packs within reach, ‘Leroy and Harley were happy’. In the bar, telling the stories of “the good days” and thus masking the hopeless present, they act as if in a farce not realizing, though, the subject of pity and laughter are they themselves. Tayo, slowly recovering from his illness, suddenly finds himself on the side of the audience and thus is able to bring a change in perspective – to strong dissatisfaction and disapproval of the “actors” of course:

*Emo hated him. Because he had spoiled it for them. They spent all their checks trying to get back the good times, and a skinny light-skinned bastard had ruined it. ... Here they were, trying to bring back that old feeling, that feeling they belonged to America the way they felt during the war. They blamed themselves for losing the new feeling; they never talked about it, but they blamed themselves just like they blamed themselves for losing the land the white people took.*

(42-3)

Tayo is also bringing back the past, but it is the past before the WWII, it is the mythical past as revealed in the stories. As Ku’oosh has shown him, the bridge between the past and the future is not a linear path, it is a circle, a web, a pattern made of stories. With this recognition, he is also able to see the parallel between the Indians and the Japanese people whom he was asked to kill in the war: they were both ‘the other’, opposing and finally yielding to the power of the Europeans. He is able to see that

‘...The real antagonist is not the Japanese but witchery, and his relationship to the Japanese acts as a foil for identifying this enemy both within and without...Tayo must come to understand that it is all a matter of transitions and transformations – mistaken identities and knowing the clan to which you belong – mixtures requiring that he unfuse and sort out confusing combinations.’<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Swan, E.: *Laguna Prototypes of Manhood*. Ibid.

This “unfusion” or balancing of powers of the two sides, perspectives or discourses, however, will be the object of the next chapter.

The last and in terms of significance most general “wound” brings me back to the very beginning of my thesis where the two narrative perspectives were described. It also calls back the question of the play of the signifiers in the novel. Basically, it would be possible to see a group of “Indian signifiers” establishing supposedly Indian meaning on the one hand, and another bunch of “European signifiers” on the other hand. Through C/ ceremony, various kinds of relationships between the two are being established, usually mediated through Tayo who is chosen in the narrative to merge the two streams of thoughts, process them in his mind, and produce a solution based on the experience of being in the middle.

Usually, the two types of signifiers are opposing each other, competing for Tayo’s (and also the reader’s) attention and approval. A web of binary oppositions is being created, Tayo’s identity task then resembling that of a deconstructionist critic.<sup>31</sup> The main oppositions seem to be:

- European/Indian
- Reality/Myth
- Linear/Circular
- Logic/Irrational

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<sup>31</sup> The similarity is both in the existence of the binary oppositions which are produced by the text (and by reality itself) and in the practice or method these oppositions are being dissolved, de-constructed. By showing that each part of the opposition is actually a part of one meaning (in Derrida’s definition: any binary opposition is algebraic (a equals –b) and the two terms can’t exist without reverence to the other), the structure which keeps them apart collapses.

- Reason/Feeling
- Outside/Inside
- Personal (Individual)/Communal

Let me expand a little on the pairs. The first opposition bears on the topic of identity and is crucial for the final interpretation of Tayo's story. This opposition is obviously the most general one and provides shelter for the rest of the terms. The second couple is related to Silko's narrative strategy and her use of narrative forms. "Linear versus circular" expresses different perceptions of time or, in narratology, development of the plot. The following two pairs, logic/irrational and reason/feeling reflect two possible views of the world or experience and two possible ways of solving problems. Outside opposing the inside, in case of *Ceremony*, should be applied to the relationship towards land and nature: treating it either as an object or subject. The last binary opposition echoes the role of language and stories (including *Ceremony* as such), as described in "literature versus folklore".

Let me deal with some of the oppositions and the way they are interrelated and "play" with each other, in more detail. The perception of time is closely connected with the notion of memory and memories which play a significant role in Tayo's recovery. At the beginning, he suffers from memories and from the effect they have on him:

*He could get no rest as long as the memories were tangled with the present, tangled up like colored threads from old grandma's wicker sewing basket...He could feel it inside his skull – the tension of little threads being pulled and how it was with tangled things, things tied together, and as he tried to pull them apart and rewind them into their places, they snagged and tangled even more.*

(6-7)

Tayo's attempts at this point are to *untangle* the threads, create a line with the beginning and the end. He is desperately trying to put them in some *logical* order, cut them off the present because they belong to the past, he is *reasoning* with them – the way Rocky is reasoning with him when trying to explain to him that the dead Japanese soldier simply cannot be Josiah, however Tayo claims and *knows* him to be (p.8). And there is the link between the perception of time and the reason/feeling opposition at hand:

*He shivered because all the facts, all the reasons made no difference any more; he could hear Rocky's words, and he could follow the logic of what Rocky said, but he could not feel anything except a swelling in his belly, a great swollen grief that was pushing into his throat.*

(8-9)

Clearly, whereas reason and logic are located in the head, the feeling is often described as dwelling in one's belly.<sup>32</sup> This is also the place where ceremonies can be found – secure and “still growing” – and so immediately, there is the connection of time (and feelings) to the form of the story being established. Tayo's narrative is just as tangled and disordered as the threads he speaks about in one of the extracts. The reader, similarly to Tayo himself, is trying to find the way out of this (narrative as well as psychological) chaos by looking for some logic, some beginnings and ends of things. The more (s)he is trying and reading, however, the clearer is the fact, that such disconnecting practice, separating the past from the present and the future, would not work. Just as Tayo comes to realize that to overcome his sickness, to accept a more universal pattern, a cyclical,

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. Henrici, A.: *The Ear for the Story and the Eye for the Pattern: Living and Reading Leslie Marmon Silko's Ceremony*. Ibid.

mythological pattern is necessary, the reader is required to accept more and more of the myth which is now leaking into the European discourse:

*He [Ku'oosh] spoke softly, using the old dialect full of sentences that were involuted with explanations of their own origins, as if nothing the old man said were his own but all had been said before and he was only there to repeat it. Tayo had to strain to catch the meaning, dense with place names he had never heard.*

(34)

The hint at place names brings me to the phenomenon of land and the two possible ways of treating it: either as an object, something which is outside, or a subject, something one considers to be a part of. A *transition* has to be made in this case, again, to bridge the two poles and show that there is a link between them one can follow, going towards the one or the other, but realizing the existence of both:

*The Texans who bought the land fenced it and posted signs in English and Spanish warning trespassers to keep out. But the people from the land grants and the people from Laguna and Acoma ignored the signs and hunted deer; (185)*

*...The ear for the story and the eye for the pattern were theirs; the feeling was theirs: we came out of this land and we are hers. (255)*

It is not a coincidence either that in the last extract “we” is being used. It reflects the shift from the individual (Tayo) towards the communal (Indian people in general), the last opposition to be discussed at this point. The symbolic meaning of the spotted cattle (see above) is the narrative expression of this level of Tayo’s identity quest. It is no more a personal journey, it is a heroic deed almost, carried out on behalf of all Indian people. Tayo isn’t just the story’s principal character, a *Ceremonial* hero, he becomes a Culture

Hero,<sup>33</sup> creating a new myth for his people: the myth of the present and the future which continues the ceremonial tradition of the past.

Seemingly, Tayo is moving from the one side of the opposition(s) – the one considered European such as reality, logic, reason, outside and the personal, towards the other, Indian “end” of the pair – the myth, irrationality, feeling, the inside and the communal. He is the means through which the ‘play’ between the signifiers takes place, he is also the one deciding about which pair of the scales will go up and which will decent. The process is wonderfully described in the following extract:

*He had been so intent on finding the cattle that he had forgotten all the events of the past days and past years. Hunting the cattle was good for that. Old Betonie was right. It was a cure for that, and maybe for other things too. The spotted cattle wouldn't be lost any more, scattered through his dreams, driven by his hesitation to admit they had been stolen, that the land- all of it – had been stolen from them. ... He stopped the mare. The silence was inside, in his belly; there was no longer any hurry. The ride into the mountain had branched into all directions of time. He knew then why the oldtimers could only speak of yesterday and tomorrow in terms of the present moment: the only certainty; and this present sense of being was qualified with bare hints of yesterday or tomorrow, by saying, “I go up to the mountain yesterday or I go up to the mountain tomorrow.”*

(192)

We can see the movement: from the linear towards the circular perception of time, from the “outside” to the “inside” landscape, from reason to feeling, from “I” to “we”.

Throughout C/ceremony, this kind of power-shift is taking place that is part of the transition or mediation I am following in my thesis. The novel itself can then be seen as a struggle, a battle – whether for balance or victory of one of the troops, or both will be the subject of the following chapter. It should be clear at this point, however, that it is a struggle towards better health, a battle for recovery and revival.

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. Swan, E. :*Laguna Prototypes of Manhood*. Ibid.

## Chapter 4

### Ceremony Coming Full Circle

#### 4.1. Within Or Beyond Literature, The Problem of Literary Interpretation Scope

Obviously, this question concerns the interpretation of the work of art and the problem of the relationship between fiction and reality. Do the topics, questions and solutions presented in fictional stories belong to their realm only? Or should one consider them in relation to the objective world? Is literature merely a linguistic construct independent of reality, or rather some form of mimetic representation, as Aristotle thought? Are we supposed to read books “for their own sake”, or read them with some extra-literary purpose?

To answer those questions, not only *Ceremony*, but also my thesis is coming full circle: both in the sense that it is going to end soon, and in the sense that this end is referring back to the beginning. In the Introduction to this paper, I mentioned several theoretical postulates or criteria according to which I was going to interpret Silko’s novel. The one I began with was Roman Jakobson’s scheme of linguistic communication which helped me to define the outlines of the present state of literary criticism. The same scheme, I believe, can help me to answer the questions introducing this chapter. Each work of art is, essentially, a process. Moreover, it is a communicative process with at

least five elements to it. It is therefore impossible to separate literature from the rest of “the communicative world”, that is, reality, similarly to a Chinese dish which is only a specific example of “food”.

What about the topics and solutions it offers then? Should one “apply” them within the sphere of *Ceremony* or beyond? Just like all dishes are prepared because someone is hungry, no book/communication, is being produced without certain purpose (s). Silko, clearly, drew inspiration from her own experience in “the real world” and transformed this artistically into her novel. Not mimetically, in the Aristotelian sense, but rather in the way we understand icons: the picture in front of us resembles the world around us. In Saussurian terminology, there is the relationship between the signifier (Silko’s *Ceremony*) and the signified (the meaning of Silko’s *Ceremony*) in which the sign bears a similarity or resemblance to an event, thing or situation (reality). Moreover, Silko is constantly putting the icon (the story of Tayo) in relation to Indian mythology (the narrative poem), stressing the interpretative aspect or maybe even *purpose* of her work. Myths were traditionally used to interpret or explain natural events or a culture’s view of the universe, it is therefore impossible to read the novel without noticing that it is supposed to establish a relationship with reality. The solution she provides in her story, is clearly and openly referring to the world “beyond” or outside the novel, probably responding to a great hunger of the contemporary (it was the 1970’s at that time) Indian society. *Ceremony* becomes ceremony, and the novel turns into a mythical narrative which is supposed to explain the vague, in this case strongly double-sided, ambiguous reality.

Whereas in some works of fiction ending might not be the most important part and it may even be “missing” on purpose, Silko’s novel would not be complete without the climax. Its narrative form as well as the basic topic call for a completion that would be consistent with the unique ”taste” of the book. This completion should therefore:

- a) bear signs of the merging, transition and change which I have been dealing with so far,
- b) point towards reality the way myths do.

Being a solution, however, it does not only reflect on the process, it also presents the outcome(s) of it. And this will be the subject of the following paragraphs.

## **4.2. The Challenges of ‘the End’ of Ceremony**

Is this the end of Ceremony? The question mark is not a mistake and I hope to have justified its occurrence by the end of this section. Before I get there, however, it is important to devote some time to the obvious aspects of “the end” that Silko provides us with in her novel. What actually happens?

One might argue that *Ceremony* could end with the re-union of Tayo and Ts’eh, some twenty pages before its actual closing. Tayo has regained his identity, he establishes a firm place for himself in the world and he meets the woman of his dreams. With her he spends his days on the lonely farm, surrounded by the spotted cattle that is slowly getting accustomed to their new home. He learns about the roots and plants she gathers, together they walk the woods and meadows. ‘Tayo’s heart beat fast; he could see Josiah’s vision

emerging, he could see the story taking form in bone and muscle.’ (226) It would seem quite natural that with the recognition that in order to complete the ceremony, the story, he must become and acknowledge himself as part of it, the narrative would come to its end. It would fulfill the goals set by Tayo’s struggle for identity. As Jim Ruppert says, ‘through love, the boundaries dissolve between story-beings and real people, between the story as a true ongoing reality and our distinctions of time.’<sup>34</sup>Why does not the story end here then?

In my opinion (as being expressed on the pages of this paper), the closing of a story must chime in with the rest of its elements, with the larger pattern that the reader together with Tayo seeks in their journeys. Metaphorically, Silko when preparing her dish used a certain recipe. I work like a detective, my objects of evidence being various tastes that together form the mosaic whole. I have tasted of the narrative forms, motifs and themes and in all of them the transitory spice could be detected. Finishing the meal, or coming towards the end of the novel, one must bear this in mind. The reason why Tayo’s story doesn’t close with his reunion with Ts’eh and the Indian tradition she represents is: it wouldn’t follow the same pattern or taste. The ending must combine the realistic and the mythical discourse and it must take place on all the “identity-levels” as discussed in the previous chapter. Although understood as finally solved, Tayo’s position at the end of the novel must still be that of a mediator and trespasser.

Tayo’s meeting with Ts’eh is the climax of his personal, and in part also generational identity search. He sets himself free of Auntie’s family, becomes

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<sup>34</sup> Ruppert, J.: *Storytelling: The Fiction of Leslie Silko*. Ibid.

independent and starts his own (way of) life. “The accident in time and space” bothers him no more, he is able to accept Rocky’s death and his life as simple facts, parts of the story, and he makes Josiah’s vision complete. He refuses the typical Indian veteran’s life (‘riding around, drinking with his buddies. They wouldn’t be suspicious then; they wouldn’t think he was crazy. He’d just be another drunk Indian, that’s all.’ 241), avoids the bars as well as his friends, but also breaks the direct physical link with the people in his village. From the very beginning though, the communal aspect of his ceremony has been stressed, the importance of his quest for the Indian people in connection to the “ethnic” level of his identity search. These goals would not be met if Silko stopped her narrative at this point. In addition to this, the closure at this point is neither supported nor enhanced by the narrative poem, another aspect of the ceremonial pattern. That is why Ts’eh is eventually leaving the hero so that he could finish the ceremony in all respects. From the lover she is transformed into a prophet and medicine woman:

*“The end of the story. They want to change it. They want it to end here, the way all their storied end, encircling slowly to choke the life away...they have their stories about us – Indian people who are only marking time and waiting for the end....Because this is the only ending they understand. (...) ...like old Betonie, she could see reflections in sandrock pools of rainwater, images shifting in the flames of juniper fire; she heard voices, low and distant in the night.*

(232)

In a way, she might be speaking to the reader who would expect the actual story to end here, but as I said before, she makes it clear that the real completion would take place only if it is different from the “expected” one. Only when we put the personal in the context of the communal. Only then ‘in light of the implicit refusal or even inability of many Indian people to participate off-reservation, Tayo and Betonie, “threshold people”,

are powerful and essential to their communities as they mediate between cultures. They transform the margins into powerful space, allowing for a self-awareness from which Indians may assert themselves.<sup>35</sup>

The true coming full circle of the story therefore happens later. Ts'eh and her role as a helper or spiritual leader, Corn Woman, is completed, she retreats, back to the sacred mountain and to the mythical background. Now it is up to Tayo himself to establish the meaning for the story. Not for himself only, but for the reader and for his people. This plot development is paralleled by the narrative poem too, in which the Hummingbird and Fly (having received the Corn Woman's advice) have to fulfill the mission for the Indian nation. What he has to deal with in this final "chapter" is not only the whites' or Indians' expectations, it is "the witchery" as such, the Ck'o'yo magic of which the whites were only part. Running along the fence of the Acoma reservation, as if running along the boundary which has been created between his people and their past, Tayo realizes 'it was difficult to call up the feeling the stories had...it was easier to feel and to believe the rumors. Crazy. Crazy Indian. Seeing things. Imagining things.' (242) He finds himself on a strange land, on the land which has been treated as an object and exploited: he is coming towards the old uranium mine:

*He knew why he had felt weak and sick; he knew why he had lost the feeling Ts'eh had given him, and why he had doubted the ceremony: this was their place, and he was vulnerable. (243)*

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<sup>35</sup> Wallace, K.L.: *Liminality and Myth in Native American Fiction*. Ibid.

However, Tayo crosses the boundary, ‘crawls through the strands of barbed wire’, once more. As the mediator, he brings both the people, all the people back together, and

*From that time on, human beings were one clan again, united by the fate the destroyers planned for all of them, for all living things; united by a circle of death that devoured people in cities twelve thousand miles away...He cried the relief he felt at finally seeing the pattern, the way all the stories fit together – the old stories, the war stories, their stories – to become the story that was still being told...A transition was about to be completed. (246-7)*

He wants to follow Ts’eh into the hills and enter the mythic pattern, but there is Emo and his friends who try to stop him. Hating him for being “different”, not fitting *their* pattern or view of the story, they are using “the witchery”, violence and pain, to put *his* story, his ceremony to an end. This would mean that despite the end C/ceremony would not be completed, the circle would not be finished. Only the vicious circle, the perpetual feeling of loss and blame, would go on:

*...and the young people would leave, go to towns like Albuquerque and Gallup where bitterness would overwhelm them, and they would lose their hope and finally themselves in drinking...the people would see only the losses – the land and the lives lost – since the whites came; the witchery would worked so that the people would be fooled into blaming only the whites and not the witchery. (249)*

Therefore, Tayo holds on, holds on to the pattern he can see in the sky and all around him, gathers the seeds Ts’eh had shown him and plant them to ‘grow there like the story, strong and translucent as the stars’. At this point, the end of the Indian myth Silko incorporated into *Ceremony* in the form of the narrative poem appears: Hummingbird and Fly bring tobacco, which completes the offering, to old Buzzard and he purifies the town. Also, Tayo’s inward, mental link to the Indian people is secured, and in the eyes of the reader who has followed his thoughts and ceremony his mythical quest is also about to be

completed, but what is still missing is the outward manifestation of this solution, the performative element which is one of the essential aspects of any ceremony. This very last part of *C*/ceremony is carried out by means of yet another transition. From Tayo – of whom the story was being told to Tayo – the *storyteller* who presents his narrative to the old people in the village. Only then the story is coming full circle as the *meaning* of it is passed on. In Silko's own words:

'...the storytelling always included the audience and the listeners, and, in fact, is believed to be inside the listener, and the storyteller's role is to draw the story out of the listeners. This kind of shared experience grows out of a strong community base. The storytelling goes on and continues from generation to generation.'<sup>36</sup>.

The 'end' of *Ceremony* can thus occur with a question mark: it is at the same time a new beginning or maybe there is no beginning or end at all, only the delicate web of stories that Silko's novel, when completed, enters. The cure is then provided at all levels and *Ceremony* has acquired meaning, its unique 'taste' the basis of which was gradually being established through the process of writing/reading, through that process of communicative feast.

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<sup>36</sup> Silko, L.M.: *Language and Literature from a Pueblo Indian Perspective*. In *Critical Fictions: The Politics of Imaginative Writing*. Seattle: Bay Press, 1991. Pages 83-93.

### 4.3. The Power and the Discourse

I am now returning to the topic of the two narrative discourses in *Ceremony* and the oppositions they bring about. This problem of the (Euro-) American versus Indian has emerged several times in this treatise both in terms of the narrative form and the content. So far, I have concluded that one of the discursive practices Silko is using to reconcile the two sides is mediation or transition taking place through the actions and thoughts of the principal character. I compared his role to that of a deconstructionist critic pointing out that one of the basic principles of his task is to articulate and thus stir up the awareness of *both* elements of the opposition in which one of them is usually taken for the basic, more important one, and the other is referred to as suppressed, minor. By means of highlighting both of them it becomes clear that “the one” cannot exist without “the other” and thus the whole “versus-matter” ends up contradicting its own logic.

*Ceremony* is structured on the American/Indian opposition. Or as Silko concludes: ‘In the novel, it’s the struggle between the force and the counter-force.’<sup>37</sup> *Ceremony* is the symbol and Tayo’s story the icon of this struggle which takes place in contemporary Indian lives. What is the choice and solution in regard to the two discourses?

In *Beyond Ethnicity*<sup>38</sup> Werner Sollors argues that literary figures *can choose* to take up the marks of community identity. This position – sometimes called biculturalism, I think, would be especially welcomed by those contemporary Indian writers, Silko

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<sup>37</sup> In Ruppert, J.: *Story Telling: The Fiction of Leslie Silko*. Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Sollors, W.: *Beyond Ethnicity*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1986.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Ruppert, J. Ibid.

among them, who reject the constraints of cultural determinism,<sup>39</sup> who try to escape the “one –versus-the-other” view of life which stresses the one off the other. The crucial moment of *Ceremony* is then the act of *choice* which throws light on both two “cultures” or cultural stances presented here as two meaning-making discourses. The two voices constantly evoke each other (that is the ‘dialogism’ Ruppert speaks about in one of his essays). From what had been said it should be clear that “the solution” or Tayo’s choice is not so much the matter of the winner/loser as it is of the very existence of a certain power-struggle to begin with. The purpose of having the set of opposites is thus not to make the one “win” over the other, but simply to show that they co-exist.

Similarly, Taoy’s final victory and successful completion of the C/ceremony does not lie in the fact that he defeats the whites or the whites’ perspective. This would imply he would simply construct new system of binaries with the previously subordinated term on the top. And it would mean becoming part of ‘the universal witchery’ then. Instead, he has to stay away from it, watch it, observe it from a distance. The most important thing is *recognition* or in other words, de-construction of the witchery. This is also consistent with the recent attempts of so called cultural studies which try to :

- Re-inscribe ‘difference’ so that it wasn’t synonymous with ‘exclusion’
- To inscribe the social body a multiplicity of difference so as to destabilize the ‘dominant’ political and cultural discourses which claim to be ‘universal’

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- To rescue ‘ethnicity’ from its negative equivalence of inclusion and exclusion, repression, dispossession and displacement; uncouple it from its connection with nation and race and move to an ethnicity with enables syncretism.<sup>40</sup>

In Silko’s novel, Tayo’s cure lies first, in the recognition of the power-struggle caused by the existence and approval of (binary) oppositions, second, in the choice he is able to make providing he does not consider one over the other, but rather one *next* to the other or even *part of* the other. His “choice” is obvious; he relearns his Indian heritage and traditions, revives the Indian “meaning-making” (always in the context of the earth, the word, the speaker of the word and the story which are all part of the philosophical stance the novel seems to take) but at the same time, *adapts it* to current circumstances.

To be conformable with the message of *Ceremony*, Tayo’s choice (of the Indian identity) is logical. He is supposed to become part of the Indian world, enter its mythical structure and thus illustrate the solution/choice that the contemporary Indian should be able to carry out in order to survive and overcome his/her illnesses and wounds. As a new myth, his story is *explaining* the situation and position of Indians, thus allowing for a continued genesis of their tradition.

And the winner is? I am afraid I cannot answer this question (actually I should not ask it in the first place it seems) unless taking part in the witchery. I think I was able to show that there is not such competition of which there might be a winner and loser, but

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<sup>40</sup> Cf. Reid, E.: *Redefining cultural identities*. In *Off-Center: Feminism and Cultural Studies*, 1991.

only two extreme points of the same line or structure. The recognition in this respect is synonymous to the dialogism or transition which I consider the basic semantic gesture of the novel.

## Conclusion

### American Studies and Literature: Search for a Pattern

Let me end with the broader topic of American Studies which is closely connected with the point I would like to make in the Conclusion of *Ceremony*. Without doubt, one of the ‘fathers’ of the field of the West and American Studies was Frederick Jackson Turner, followed by the “frontier school” which reached one of its climaxes in the work of Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land*, and a new wave of historians (such as Earl Pomeroy, Francis Paul Prucha or Patricia Nelson Limerick) whose work was inspired, both in a positive and negative way, by the theories of the two important figures. Two major features can be recognized in their work: in case of Turner, his ‘most fruitful suggestions was that invasion, settlement, and community formation followed certain broad, repeating patterns in most, if not all, part of North America,<sup>41</sup> as for Smith, his ‘triumph can be traced to (...) his willingness to venture bold speculations about a diverse array of western materials, and then to move like Turner beyond the bounds of a narrowly regional history in order to pose much larger questions of cultural meaning and national identity.’<sup>42</sup>

As soon as not only historical *events* but especially the *meaning* of those events and history as such became subject to historians, new aspects of research emerged which

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<sup>41</sup> Cronon, W., Miles, G., Gitlin, J (ed.): *Becoming West*. In Under an Open Sky, Rethinking America’s Western Past. W.W. Norton & Company, New York, 1992.

<sup>42</sup> Mitchell, L.C.: *Henry Nash Smith’s Myth of the West*. In Writing Western History, Essays on Major Western Historians, Richard W. Etulain ed., University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, 1991.

put history in the larger context of *culture* and its establishment. Probably the most evident example of this is Smith's "symbol and myth" approach to the past in which 'by reading metaphor historically...Smith revealed how powerfully rhetoric itself can invert historical patterns of cause and effect.'<sup>43</sup> Suddenly, the study of American history and character became an interdisciplinary *mélange* which opened itself to new approaches and focuses, such as the question of American Indians and other minorities and the way they were treated during the European settlement, the issue of gender and its impact on the shaping of contemporary "American character", and last but not least "the notion that a symbiotic relation exists between artists and their social contexts and that the collective myths and symbols cherished by a society are the property of no individual effort but, rather, are jointly produced"<sup>44</sup>.

The reason I have devoted some time to this brief historical outline of American Studies is to show that no matter from which direction one moves, the conclusion one arrives at seems always to be the same: *context*. Be it in literary studies or history, it is no longer possible to isolate one view from another, on the contrary, to explain certain phenomenon different perspectives are necessary as well as a combination of views which would support each other, one throwing more light on the other. From analysis, *synthesis* emerges, from the study of isolated elements, *a pattern*. In order to reveal the meaning of the West, and eventually of America as such, various aspects of the West and America must be read in the context of politics, economics, arts, language, psychology, and so on and so forth.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid

<sup>44</sup> Ibid

Similarly in my treatise: in order to reveal the meaning of *Ceremony* I employed various theories and aspects of literary criticism as well as pursued different contexts (historical, anthropological, ethnological, linguistic etc.) related to the novel and its story. My purpose was the same as of the historians who ceased looking for ‘what’ and started asking ‘why’ – to find a pattern. Something which would repeat itself on different levels and thus established a general feature of the text, the semantic gesture, the basis of the poetics of the work, something which could be traced throughout the narrative and would lead, eventually, to a convincing interpretation of the book.<sup>45</sup>

Reading *C/ceremony* page by page, the reader is tracing its story, and as if becomes the historian revealing the chapters of Tayo’s, but at the same time his/her own experience within the quest. Just like Turner, Smith or Dana, (s)he is looking for a pattern which would point like arrows along the path towards the establishment of meaning. In *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*<sup>46</sup> the pattern was that of transformation of the Western frontier to a region in Darwinian terms, in *Virgin Land*<sup>47</sup> - the transformation of myths and symbols as they appeared in various kinds of literary production, in Dana’s work – the transformation of different languages and, consequently,

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<sup>45</sup> In terms of literary theory, *Towards the Poetics of Ceremony* was inspired by the Structuralist school and its assumption that each literary work is a construct. Nevertheless, I disapprove of its purely linguistic character independent of reality and that is why I am using *different* theories, besides the structuralist one, to expand on the original thought and provide it with a more contemporary meaning. Rather than a construct, the novel in my eyes becomes an organism in which each cell has a meaning because of its relationship to another cell and the concord of thousands of those cells then makes the functioning of the whole body possible. However, for the body to function not only internal but also external factors are crucial, and that is why I employ the context as one of the important elements which helps to create meaning, too.

<sup>46</sup> In Ray Allen Billington, ed. *Frontier and Section: Selected Essays of Frederick Jackson Turner*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1961.

<sup>47</sup> Smith, H.N.: *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1970.

cultures resulting in the “Babel” of California. What about in *Ceremony*? As I stated in the Introduction, I consider the novel part of contemporary American literature, that is, part of American culture. One of the essential questions of the novel is that of (native) American identity. It shouldn't be surprising therefore that the pattern of Silko's novel which I have found is also – *transformation*. The only difference is that Silko is approaching it from the native perspective, from the other side which, for a long time, has been ignored, overlooked or at least underestimated.

My interpretation of Silko's novel should have proved that:

1. In *Ceremony* there is a pattern of transition, transformation or mediation which can be detected on different narrative levels,
2. to analyze the pattern within the narrative more than one theoretical approach is necessary so that various aspects (historical, psychological, ethnic, performative, symbolic etc.) of the novel were covered,
3. the right (as opposed to irrelevant) meaning of the novel can only be reached through that pattern and by means of the acknowledgment of the interdependence of the different layers of the narrative and finally,
4. contemporary Native American literature should be placed within American literature, not aside.

Most of the theoretical background to my thesis was presented in the Introduction which answered the question of the choice and use of literary theories as well as my view

of the relationship between the Indian and the American in the context of contemporary literature and culture. My basic argument is somewhat deconstructionist (as it also appears further in the paper): the Euro-American vs. Native opposition is, in fact just two elements of the same pattern. The one would have no meaning without the other. The two discourses or cultures are so entangled and interdependent from the very moment when the first European trader, farmer and finally city dweller encountered the first Indian that the identity of one cannot be described without regard to the other and vice versa.

The first three points of my theory (as above) were covered by the first through the fourth chapter. Dealing with the pattern of transition and its manifestation on different narrative levels I used the reader-response theory, semiology, deconstruction and post-colonial Studies to show how various elements, be it language, motifs, characters, Tayo's story or finally the meaning of his identity quest, correspond and support the prevailing "meditative" feature of the book and function as interrelated cells within the body of *Ceremony*. Through the existence of the two narrative discourses, the motifs and symbols occurring during *C/ceremony* gained their meaning, were able to enter "the organism" of the novel and thus worked within it. Further, the characters and their actions were often analyzed through those motifs and symbology (e.g. Ts'eh and her attributes). When I dealt with the basic topics of *C/ceremony*, with the problem of identity of the contemporary Native Americans, the outside factors came into play: history, economy, politics and power.

The final meaning of Silko's story was then simply derived from the way its "cells" had functioned and established relationships throughout the novel. Thus *C/*

ceremony as well as my treatise came full circle: it ended where it had started. Tayo's victory and the meaning of *Ceremony*, I argue, lies in the recognition (or de-construction) of both the discourses, in the revelation of the pattern of their merging. My thesis concludes the same way because I, just like any other reader, simply followed the signs along the path, becoming part of C/ceremony.

Silko's novel is often referred to as "identity searching", dealing with the native perspectives and views. It is surprising, however, how much Tayo's story has in common with the story of America as such, its frontiers and the formation of national identity. Although I studied *Ceremony* as literary *text*, the *context* it refers to is impossible to ignore. The reader might become literary critic as well as psychologist, historian or ethnologist. The story opens up to different perspectives. In my thesis I focused on what I consider the *making* of the novel, its essential qualities, and only outlined the possibilities of further, more specific study of the piece from those (and other) perspectives. It was my aim to show how the body of the novel functions, what are its cells and what is their ruling principle. I dare say I have come very close to it.

## České resumé

### Po stopách amerických indiánů trochu jinak...

Na počátku mé práce nazvané *Towards the Poetics of Ceremony* stála otázka: Jak přistupovat k současné indiánské literatuře v evropském kulturním kontextu? Jak „správně“ číst indiánské autory a autorky? Co hledat v jejich dílech a jak vykládat jejich smysl? V širokém slova smyslu jsem narážela na problém čtení exotické etnické literatury jako takové. Specifikum indiánské literatury ovšem spočívá v tom, že se čeští a další středoevropští čtenáři, ačkoli jen zprostředkovaně, s indiány a indiánskou tematikou měli možnost stýkat od dětství, ať už ve formě dobrodružných „mayovek“ nebo jejich úspěšných filmových verzí. Při slově „indiánský“ již tudíž existuje jakási představa, očekávání či předobraz toho, co je nám jako „indiánské“ předkládáno.

Velký problém spočívá v tom, že na základě hrdinských činů Vinnetoua<sup>48</sup> a podlých intrik Siouxů se tato představa notně zjednodušuje a zároveň přitom bohužel také upevňuje – ve shodě s naším kulturním povědomím o původních obyvatelích jednoho z největších států na světě. Tuto problematiku, již v Předmluvě své práce označuji jako „stereotyping practice“, je nutné mít na zřeteli kdykoli se začne psát a uvažovat o indiánské literatuře dneška. Jedním z cílů (byť ne ten hlavní) mé práce tedy bylo ukázat, že k plodné interpretaci takového díla jako například *Ceremony* (Obřad) od Leslie Marmon Silkové je třeba se od stereotypů a zažitých představ oprostit, vnímat indiánské

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<sup>48</sup> May, K.: *Vinnetou*. O. Flögl (přel.), Brno, Návrat, 1993.

autory v kontextu celé americké literatury a nehledat pro ně tudíž žádné zvláštní kategorie či postupy, jež by měly za cíl odhalovat „indiánskost“ předkládaného textu.

Podstatnou část této americko-versus-indiánské otázky řeším v Úvodu práce, pomáhajíc si metaforickým příkladem čínského jídla, které, myslím si, je v evropském kontextu často radno požívat bez tradičních čínských tyčinek, jelikož ty, octnou-li se v nezkušených rukou Evropana, mohou podle rčení nadělat spíše víc škody než užitku. S tímto přirovnáním souvisí další aspekt etnické literatury, a to je dotěrná představa, že každý Číňan musí jistě k jídlu používat tyčinky, respektive že každý příslušník určitého etnika ve svém díle automaticky předkládá čtenáři svou kulturu, hodnoty, politický přístup atd. V žádném případě nechci tvrdit, že tomu tak není. Tvrdím ovšem, že se tak neděje vždycky a takové „nacionální“ stanovisko vůbec nemusí být hlavním poselstvím díla. Důsledkem takové sugerované představy „etnické literatury“ může často docházet k nad-interpretacím, které násilně v díle zdůrazňují prvky, jež by jinak neměli prvořadou významotvornou funkci.

Řešení, které ve své práci podávám, je založeno na jednoduché myšlence: čím více úhlů pohledu, tím menší nebezpečí vytváření stereotypů a menší riziko takové nad-interpretace. Mé východisko ve studii románu *Ceremony* má počátek v obecném jakobsonovském komunikačního schématu, na které navazují teorii pražského strukturalismu, a přes tento teoretický základ se teprve dostávám k otázkám spojeným výlučně s dílem Silkové – k performativním prvkům textu, využití čtenářsky orientované kritiky stejně jako kulturních studií a dekonstrukce. Stavíc na předpokladu, že *dílo* je tím direktivním prvkem, které si má určit příslušné *prostředky*, pomůcky, ke své interpretaci,

odpovídám na mnohozvučnost textu *Ceremony* polyfonií teorií a kritických postupů. Pověstnou červenou nití, která spojuje jednotlivé kapitoly práce, je koncepce „poetiky“ díla, tedy něčeho, co by se jako sémantické gesto textu projevovalo na všech jeho rovinách a dávalo základ výslednému smyslu. V případě Silkové je takovým opakovaným znakem proměna, mísení a splývání dvou základních diskurzů: amerického a tradičního indiánského.

První kapitola zkoumá toto téma na rovině jazyka a vyprávěcí formy. K porozumění formy *Ceremony*, která odráží její obsah, je nutné se alespoň se základními znaky indiánského chápání jazyka, slov a příběhů: myšlenky a jejich slovní vyjádření se totiž tradičně považují za rovnoprávné prvky reality, příběhy a vyprávění jsou nedílnou součástí historie každého kmene i jeho jednotlivého příslušníka. Oproti evropské tradici, která od dob knihtisku začala odlišovat literaturu jako psaný jazyk od mluveného slova, indiáni se této opozici brání dodnes. V jejich současných dílech se proto často vyskytují performativní prvky, převzaté z tradiční role indiánského vypravěče příběhů (*storyteller*) jedním z příkladů může být snaha Silkové zapojit čtenáře do děje tak, jako by čtením *C/ceremony* vlastně spolu s hlavním hrdinou spolupracovali na úspěšném dokončení rituálu.

Dále tato kapitola podrobně rozebírá znaky obou diskurzů a jejich vzájemnou interakci a dialog, na jejichž základě je pak možné správně interpretovat jednotlivé epizody příběhu. Tabulka zachycující přehledně vývoj dějů na obou rovinách jasně potvrzuje, že indiánské mýty mají přímou souvislost s Tayovými osudy v románu a popírá tím názor některých kritiků (např. Paula Gunn Allen), že mytická linie je v textu

přebytečná a nemá význam. Naopak, závěr první kapitoly mé studie potvrzuje důležitost transgrese a vzájemné spolupráce obou kulturních protějšků – bez nich by se plně neosvětlil význam.

Ve druhé části rigorózní práce se zabývám rovinou narativních symbolů, motivů a postav, přičemž na úvod je opět připojena krátká kapitola osvětlující indiánskou mytologii, která figuruje v textu. Zásadní roli v tradiční indiánské symbolice hrají ženy. Thought Woman, *Ts'its'isi'nako*, stojí na vrcholu mytologického trojúhelníku a znamená absolutní počátek a zdroj slov, jmen i příběhů. Corn Woman/Mother je další mytickou postavou, pro reálný život zřejmě nejdůležitější, jelikož symbolizuje Zemi, plodnost, úrodu. Posledním z trojice je mužská postava Sun Father. Stojí v opozici ke Corn Woman a je synonymem pro energii, tvořivou sílu a mužskost. Všechny tři postavy většiny tradičních indiánských mýtů přitom na sobě závisí a jedna nemůže existovat bez druhé – tak jako není úrody bez zemské půdy a lidské energie, příběhů bez tvořivosti.

Zbývající oddíly ve druhé kapitole se zaměřují na vybrané motivy a symboly, přičemž rozlišení těchto dvou pojmů je v kontextu *Ceremony* zásadní: zatímco motivy jsou pouze jakési stavební součásti celkové narativní výstavby textu, symboly přesahují do mytického rámce příběhu. Opět platí, že jen vzájemnými proměnami obou se tato rovina významově dotváří. Silková užívá například celou škálu vodních motivů (déšť, dešťové mraky, sníh, řeka, moč apod.), které v celkové struktuře románu, podobně jako celá řada dalších podobně souvisejících řad, vytváří podpůrnou 'sít' pro čtenáře, jemuž se při četbě tímto způsobem vrací do podvědomí epizody a postavy nějak spojené s tím či oním motivem. Výsledný efekt je typický pro rituál- neustálé opakování a návraty.

Některé z motivů mají ovšem nejen „stavební“, ale i významotvornou funkci, a to tehdy, začnou-li mít souvislost s mytickým rámcem příběhu. Déšť se stává symbolem Tayova pouta s indiánskou tradicí, které je přerušeno v okamžiku, kdy se Tayo stane součástí bílého světa bojujícího proti válečnému nepříteli a kdy prokleje déšť, který znemožňuje rychlou přepravu jeho raněného nevlastního bratra Rockyho do bezpečí. Cesta ke znovunalezení rodných kořenů pak vede přes další symbol - odolné mexické plemeno dobytka, který dokáže přežít i ta největší sucha. Tayův úkol spočívá v nalezení ztraceného dobytka, čímž nejen odčiní svou kletbu deště a přivolá jej zpět, ale zároveň je schopný objevit svou identitu a životní cestu.

Ženské postavy hrají v Tayově obřadu centrální úlohu. Na tomto místě ovšem také vysvětlují, proč jsem přes lákavost tohoto faktu nevyužila možnost interpretovat ženské hrdinky podle feministických teorií. Ačkoli hrdinův úspěch často přímo závisí na radách a porozumění ze strany žen, nejde zde o otázku rodu nebo síly. Ženy mají zkrátka významné postavení proto, že je podle tradiční indiánské mytologie mají zastávat. Nejde zde o manifestaci nějaké převahy, rovnosti nebo teorie rodu. Výběr ženských a mužských hrdinů je v druhé kapitole opět podřízen hlavnímu tématu, tedy zaměřuje se zejména na ty postavy, které významným způsobem charakterizují proměny a mísení diskurzů v románu. To se projevuje i v prostorovém uspořádání, jež je předmětem poslední části této kapitoly.

Se třetí kapitolou mé práce se přibližuji nejvyšší rovině – rovině významu a smyslu. Uvádí ji stručná exkurze do problematiky indiánských obřadů v dnešní době, ze které je patrné, jak problematičtější je otázka tradice a tradičního provedení právě v této

oblasti, jež se stala centrem zájmu turistů a tvoří nezanedbatelnou součást příjmů v indiánských rezervacích. Na rozdíl od populárních obřadů, na které se přijíždějí dívat stovky diváků z celého světa, pro Silkovou je smysl *C/ceremony* někde jinde: ve shodě s poetikou díla jde opět o přizpůsobování starých tradic novým podmínkám. O dialog starého s novým, přeměnu staré formy pro zachování cenného obsahu.

Jak uvádím v titulu třetí kapitoly, Tayův symbolický rituál má léčebný účinek. Je to lék na jeho zmatenou mysl, duši, ztracenou identitu. Jak popisuji podrobně v dalších částích, Tayův problém osobnosti má několik rovin. Je třeba na něj pohlížet jako na problém osobní, plynoucí z jeho postavení míšence – sirotka uprostřed indiánské komunity, jako na problém generační, způsobený velkou změnou postavení indiánů během druhé světové války a v neposlední řadě je tu také aspekt etnický, tedy otázka příslušnosti k určité sociální skupině. Kapitola se pak podrobně věnuje popisu „symptomů“ na jednotlivých úrovních s tím, že je rozpracovává v obecnější dekonstruktivistickou teorii, podle které je názorně vidět, jak dialog obou diskurzů, a tedy de-konstrukce jejich opozice, funguje i na této rovině a tvoří předstupeň ke finální interpretaci smyslu románu.

Závěr, kterým Silková ukončuje svoje dílo, a jeho interpretace je tématem poslední kapitoly mé práce. První otázka, která v této souvislosti vyvstane, je problém dosahu významu tohoto románu. Vztahuje se jeho řešení pouze na literární text, nebo má zasahovat do skutečnosti? Řešení je opět nasnadě, uvědomíme-li si stavbu celého díla: jde o obřad, o nový mýtus, který má tudíž poukazovat ke skutečnosti, nějakým způsobem ji vysvětlovat, ukázat její smysl. Na této rovině celkového smyslu, domnívám se, je tedy

třeba uvědomit si i mimo-literární příčiny vzniku *Ceremony* a otázky, ke kterým se tak Silková nepřímo vyslovuje.

Řešení, které nabízí, je vyvrcholením celého konceptu, který nazývám poetikou daného díla. Spočívá v odstranění opozice indiánský X americký a nabízí na ni nový pohled, takový, co vidí obě kultury jako dvě součásti jediného celku, jako vzájemně propojené a ovlivňované entity, které nemohou jedna bez druhé existovat – právě ve smyslu Derridovy formule  $a = -b$ . Otázkou moci a diskurzu, ke které se dekonstrukce v románu vyjadřuje, se zabývám v závěru této kapitoly a docházím znovu k témuž výsledku: Tayovo vítězství v závěru *Ceremony*, jeho síla, nespočívá v porážce euro-amerického diskurzu nebo kultury indiánskou tradicí. Stojí na pochopení nutnosti jejich koexistence, vzájemné komunikace a tedy i porozumění.

Toto poselství se v Závěru rigorózní práce snažím rozšířit na celou oblast amerických studií, ve kterých, podobně jako v románu Silkové, jde od počátku o nalezení určitého obecnějšího „vzoru“, *pattern*, jenž by dával smysl, do kterého by zapadaly dějiny stejně jako současný vývoj na americkém kontinentě. Příklady badatelů pokoušejících se takový vzor nalézt byli např. Frederick Jackson Turner či Henry Nash Smith, jejichž dílo se stalo základem celého nového odvětví v humanitních vědách. Ačkoli každý se zaměřoval na problematiku americké historie z trochu jiného úhlu, jedno jim bylo společné a zůstává inspirací dodnes: objevili důležitost kontextu. Do dějin najednou nepatřila jen historická fakta a data, vstoupily do ní nové aspekty – sociálně-ekonomické, politické, umělecké, psychologické a další a další, které vrhaly nové světlo na události z americké minulosti. Mezi jinými se začal přehodnocovat i pohled na

původní obyvatelé, indiány. Stejně jako v mé studii k románu Leslie Silkové, pro kterou jsem použila několik kritických přístupů, i v amerických studiích se díky kombinaci pohledů začal rýsovat nový vzor: vzájemný dialog, interakce, přeměna. A to, co Silková řekla svým románem je možné převést do širších souvislostí situace americké společnosti: dnes stejně jako před pěti stoletími jde o dvoustranný proces, o obřad, k jehož úspěšnému konci může vést jen přizpůsobivost, pružná schopnost změny nebo adaptace a vzájemná tolerance.

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## Internet Resources

<http://www.altx.com/interviews/silko.html> (An interview)

<http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/~erben/silkoin.htm> (An interview)

<http://www.unm.edu/~ketchelx/silko-web-index/silko-home.html> (A comprehensive www index)

<http://www.ipl.org/cgi-bin/ref/litcrit/litcrit.out.pl?au=sil-306> (Collection of links to biographical and critical sites about Silko and her works)

<http://voices.cla.umn.edu/authors/LeslieMarmonSilko.html> (A series from Voices from the Gaps: Women Writers of Color produced by the Department of English and Programs in American Studies at the University of Minnesota. Included is an indepth biography, selected bibliography and related links)

<http://www.richmond.edu/~rnelson/woman.html> (A detailed biographical essay on the author, by a professor at the University of Richmond, Robert M. Nelson. Contains reference to several of her works.)

[http://history.hanover.edu/hhr/hhr93\\_2.htm](http://history.hanover.edu/hhr/hhr93_2.htm) ([Leslie Marmon Silko's Ceremony and the Effects of White Contact on Pueblo Myth and Ritual](#))

<http://www.op.org/DomCentral/library/native.htm> ([Listening to Native Americans: Making Peace with the Past for the Future](#))

<http://www.richmond.edu/~rnelson/pvi.html> ([Place, Vision, and Identity in Native American Literatures](#))

<http://www.galenet.com/servlet/GLD/hits?NA=Silko&TI=&n=10&BY=&DY=&NT=&SU=&TX=&u=CA&u=CLC&u=DLB&c=1&secondary=false&origSearch=true&t=KW&s=1&r=s&o=DataType&l=r&locID=wash11212> (Excellent Gale Literary Database)

[http://www.galenet.com/servlet/GLD/hits?  
c=1&secondary=false&origSearch=true&u=CA&u=CLC&u=DLB&t=KW&s=1&r=d&o  
=DataType&n=10&l=d&locID=wash11212&h=CLC0414BIO0414&NA=silko#LinkToC  
riticism](http://www.galenet.com/servlet/GLD/hits?c=1&secondary=false&origSearch=true&u=CA&u=CLC&u=DLB&t=KW&s=1&r=d&o=DataType&n=10&l=d&locID=wash11212&h=CLC0414BIO0414&NA=silko#LinkToCriticism) (Gale Literary Database: critical essays about Leslie Silko's works)

<http://www.bellhowell.infolearning.com/proquest> (Online resources search engine)