

Sandra Elisabeth de Oliveira Santos

Entangled Stories:
The Significance of the “Story” in *Ceremony* by Leslie Marmon
Silko

Faculdade de Letras
Universidade de Minas Gerais
2015

Entangled Stories:
The Significance of the “Story” in *Ceremony* by Leslie Marmon Silko

by

Sandra Elisabeth de Oliveira Santos

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of “Mestre em Literaturas
de Língua Inglesa”

Thesis Advisor

José de Paiva dos Santos, Ph. D.

Belo Horizonte

Faculdade de Letras

Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais

2015

Ficha catalográfica

S237e Santos, Sandra Elisabeth de Oliveira
Entangled Stories: The Significance of the “Story” in *Ceremony* by
Leslie Marmon Silko / Sandra Elisabeth de Oliveira Santos. – Belo
Horizonte, 2015.
105 p.

Orientador: José de Paiva dos Santos.
Dissertação (Mestrado em Literaturas de Língua Inglesa) –
Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Faculdade de Letras, Programa de
Pós-graduação em Estudos Literários, MG, 2015.

1. Literatura indígena norte americana. 2. Tradição oral. 3. Formação
identitária. I. Santos, José de Paiva dos, orient. II. Título.

CDU 82.09(73)(043)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To God, for having given me the strength to go on even when things seemed so difficult.

To my mother, Maria do Socorro, for her love, encouragement and unconditional support.

To my father, Luiz, who instilled in me the love for learning and the eagerness for achieving higher.

To my sister Rita, and my brothers, Antônio and Fernando, for always being there when I need them.

To my friends for the support, and for just being close to me and making my life happier.

To Professors Luiz Fernando Ferreira Sá and Thomas L. Burns, whose courses were of great help to develop parts of my discussion.

To Professor Eliana Lourenço de Lima Reis, whose instructions, and insightful comments were very important for the development of part of this thesis.

To Professors Gláucia Renate Gonçalves and Juliana Borges Oliveira de Moraes for their willingness to participate in my defense committee.

My earnest gratitude goes to my advisor, José de Paiva dos Santos, who has always been available and supportive, and whose knowledge and vast competence I could count on to develop this piece of work.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
1. What’s been Lost and What Hasn’t: History, Cultural Trauma and War Stories	14
1.1. Another Side to North American History.....	14
1.2. Cultural Trauma in <i>Ceremony</i>	22
1.3. War Stories.....	31
1.4. Not Everything is Lost	38
2. The Story, its Forms and Functions in <i>Ceremony</i>	40
2.1. “In the beginning was the word”: Salvaging Cultural Heritage through Performance	40
2.2. The Narrative Text in <i>Ceremony</i> : Story, Events and Plot.....	54
2.3. <i>Ceremony</i> as a Postmodernist Novel	62
2.4. A Story Made of Stories	70
3. Healing through Ceremony; Overcoming Witchery	72
3.1. PTSD and the Healing Power of Stories	72
3.2. Completing the Ceremony: A Journey towards Identity	78
3.3. Preventing Witchery from Stopping the Story	89
3.4. “No Boundaries, Only Transitions”	94
Conclusion	96
Works Cited	99
Additional Bibliographical References	103

ABSTRACT

This work analyzes Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* (1977) in order to investigate the several stories that compose the novel, discussing their form and function, and how they contribute to the development of the plot. The plot is constructed of many fragments in prose narrative and embedded texts in the form of poetry. These embedded texts are mostly mythic narratives from Laguna and Navajo oral traditions and they are closely related to the story of Tayo, the main character in the novel. Tayo, after returning from World War II suffering from posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), goes on a journey in order to complete a ceremony intended to heal him. During his journey towards healing, Tayo has the chance to deal with his traumatic memories, reconnect with the land, assess his relationship with his family and establish his place at home, and cope with his condition of liminality. However, the healing process described is only possible due to the stories Tayo hears and remembers. Only when he understands the connections between all the stories, can he complete his ceremony. It is these connections I seek to explicate in my discussion, bringing to the fore questions such as: the performance of war stories as a way to deal with cultural trauma; the importance of performance for the preservation of Native American heritage; and the role of stories in identity formation. In my discussion, I also assess the claim that *Ceremony* is a postmodernist novel through the analysis of its structure in light of postmodernist theories, and examine hybridity as a recurrent motif in the novel.

RESUMO

O presente trabalho analisa o romance *Ceremony* da autora Leslie Marmon Silko com o objetivo de investigar as várias histórias que compõem o romance, discutindo suas formas e funções, e como essas histórias contribuem para o desenvolvimento do enredo. O enredo é composto por vários fragmentos em prosa e textos na forma de poesia em meio a eles. Os textos na forma de poesia são em sua maioria narrativas míticas da tradição oral das tribos Laguna e Navajo, e estão intimamente ligados à história de Tayo, o protagonista do romance. Tayo, após retornar da segunda guerra mundial sofrendo de transtorno de estresse pós-traumático (TEPT), inicia uma jornada com o objetivo de completar uma cerimônia de cura. Durante essa jornada em busca de cura, Tayo tem a chance de enfrentar suas memórias traumáticas, retomar seu contato com a natureza, avaliar seu relacionamento com sua família e estabelecer seu lugar junto a ela, e lidar com sua condição de liminaridade. Contudo, o processo de cura descrito só é possível devido às histórias que Tayo escuta e às de que ele se lembra. Somente quando ele compreende as ligações entre todas essas histórias é que ele consegue completar sua cerimônia. São essas ligações que eu procuro explicar na minha discussão, levantando questões tais como: a performance de histórias de guerra como forma de lidar com o trauma cultural; a importância da performance para a preservação da herança cultural indígena; e o papel das histórias na formação da identidade. Na minha discussão, eu também avalio a classificação de *Ceremony* como sendo um romance pós-modernista a partir da análise de sua estrutura à luz de teorias pós-modernistas, e examino o hibridismo como tema recorrente no romance.

INTRODUCTION

According to the Online Oxford Dictionary the word story can be defined as: “[a]n account of imaginary or real people and events told for entertainment”; “[a] plot or storyline”; “[a] piece of gossip; a rumor”; “[a] false statement; a lie”; “[a] report of an item of news in a newspaper, magazine, or broadcast”; “[a]n account of past events in someone’s life or in the development of something”; “[a] particular person’s representation of the facts of a matter”; “[a] situation viewed in terms of the information known about it or its similarity to another”; “[t]he facts about the present situation”; or “[t]he commercial prospects or circumstances of a particular company”. The several meanings displayed above are more than enough to illustrate the plurality of meanings of the term “story”. However, in Native American cultures the term acquires other dimensions due to the importance of oral tradition for them. Stories, thus, are a key element in the Native American context, presenting themselves under different forms and possessing different functions. In the novel *Ceremony*, by Leslie Marmon Silko, the reader can observe the different forms that stories take woven into its plot and the different functions each of them performs.

Ceremony is about Tayo, a Native American war veteran, who returns from WWII and is sent to a Veterans’ Hospital in California, where he is expected to recover in order to return home to his reservation, Laguna Pueblo, in New Mexico. After coming back from what seems to be a catatonic state, the doctors release him even though he was not fully recovered. Since Western medicine is unable to cure him, whose trauma caused by the war goes beyond physical sickness and psychological uneasiness, when he gets back home, his grandmother asks the Pueblo’s medicine man, old Ku’oosh, to perform a ceremony to heal him. When the Scalp ceremony performed by old Ku’oosh does not work, he refers Tayo to a Navajo medicine man, Betonie, known and feared for performing rituals and ceremonies that

differed from the traditional ones. Tayo starts, then, a journey towards healing, which helps him learn about his people's culture, understand his life history and begin a process of identity formation.

However, the PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) is not the only trauma he has to overcome. Besides this, Tayo blames himself for the six-year drought that struck his pueblo and the death of his cousin, Rocky, who died in the war. The guilt he feels adds up to the blame his aunt puts on him. She blames him for his mother's misbehavior in the past; for the fact that he is half-white (some evidences in the text point out to a Mexican ancestry) and half Native American; for the fact that he is sick; and even for the fact that he was not the one who died in the war. Auntie makes clear to him that his being alive brings shame to the family before the others in the reservation.

His journey is presented through a fragmented narrative, where embedded texts, such as poems, stories, and flashbacks are intertwined. The novel begins with Tayo meeting his friend Harley for one more session of drinking and storytelling about the war. As the novel progresses, the reader has the chance to go through Tayo's memories of the war and in the Veteran hospital; of his miserable life with his mother; and his childhood and adolescence in his grandmother's house after his mother's death. These memories show Tayo's coming of age and help not only the reader, but also Tayo himself, understand his current situation so that he can try and change it through the performance of Betonie's ceremony.

Tayo decides, then, to recover the stolen cattle of his uncle, Josiah, who died while he was away from home. Josiah's cattle, a herd of hybrid animals, wild but very resilient, were stolen by white ranchers. When Tayo goes after the speckled cattle, he meets T'se, a mysterious woman who helps him both recover the cattle, and fight his enemies in order to complete his ceremony. T'se teaches Tayo the uses of herbs and other plants, making it

possible for him to rekindle his relationship with nature. She also helps him to make sense of the stories surrounding him and the importance of each of them in Tayo's life.

These several stories, shown in their different forms and their many functions, make the completion of the ceremony possible in this awareness-raising process. By the end of the novel Tayo can finally see the relevance of all these stories to his life:

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. He was not crazy; he had never been crazy. He had only seen and heard the world as it was: no boundaries, only transitions through all distances and time.

(...)

He had only to complete this night, to keep the story out of reach of the destroyers for a few more hours, and their witchery would turn, upon itself, upon them. (246-247)

Tayo can see, then, that what is happening to him is also part of a story, a story he tells later to the elders in the reservation, when they confine him in the kiva.

Although *Ceremony* was first published in 1977, Silko, according to her preface to the 2006's edition of the novel, wrote it between 1973 and 1975 while she and her family were living in Ketchikan, Alaska. She had a book contract with Viking Press and a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, which made it possible for her to dedicate herself entirely to the writing of *Ceremony*. Despite her distancing from her place of birth, Silko succeeds in depicting accurately the landscape of Laguna Pueblo and its surroundings. She inserts stories that come from Keresan and Navajo oral tradition and portrays life in the reservation after World War II, according to what she might have heard when she was a child.

Silko was born in 1948 in a home that “reflected three backgrounds: Laguna, Mexican and white” (Seyersted 13). She lived in an “in-between” position and did not enjoy the same access to clan activities as the full bloods. She received her primary education at the Bureau of Indian Affairs School in Laguna, and after fifth grade, she went to the Catholic schools in Albuquerque, while she engaged in family activities such as gathering the cattle in the family’s ranch and taking part in deer hunts. She got her B.A. in English in 1969, from the University of New Mexico, the same year when her first work, “The Man to Send Rain Clouds”, was published in *New Mexico Quarterly*. After getting her degree, she started studying law in a program intended to help Native Americans get their own lawyers, which she quit in 1971 to dedicate herself to writing and teaching. In 1974, she published *Laguna Woman*, a collection of Poems, while seven of her stories appeared in Kenneth Rosen’s anthology *The Man to Send Rain Clouds*.

Meanwhile, her short story “Lullaby” was published in *Chicago Review* and Silko was awarded the NEA writing fellowship. In 1981, she had her book *Storyteller* published, which included her previously published work of poetry and short fiction and family narratives that came along with pictures of the people and places that the stories feature. In that same year she was awarded a five-year MacArthur Foundation Prize Fellowship, and could continue devoting herself to writing and other artistic activities. In 1991, after ten years of dedication, she published *Almanac of the Dead*. Following the publishing of some works of poetry and short stories, in 1999, she published another novel, *Gardens in the Dunes*. In the meantime, Silko wrote and published essays and articles, taught at the University of New Mexico and, after, the University of Arizona, and worked with filmmaking. One of her most recent works is *The Turquoise Ledge: A Memoir*, published in 2010.

According to Robert Nelson, the motif of departure and return is often present on Silko’s work along with the “persistently Laguna storytelling persona”, a trait she acquires

through the influence of her paternal grandmother A'mooh, Marie Anaya Marmon, and her great-aunt Susie, Susan Reyes, a schoolteacher and Keresan cultural historian, both of them storytellers. Even when the narratives are not set in Laguna, Silko's work is filled with Laguna characters, places and landscapes, and Keresan stories.

Laguna Pueblo is a federally recognized Native American tribe whose inhabitants live in six villages located in west-central New Mexico: Laguna, Mesita, Paguete, Seama, Paraje and Encinal. Laguna is located forty-five miles west from Albuquerque and houses the tribal administration of the Pueblo. The reservation consists of approximately 500,000 acres of land where over 7,000 inhabitants live. Although Kawaik is the real name of the tribe in Keresan, the native language of the pueblo, it is known by the name Laguna, in Spanish small lake, because of the colonization by the Spanish through the establishment of the Laguna Mission of San Jose, in 1699. Whilst Catholicism coexisted with the native religious beliefs and practices, the white Protestants, who arrived from 1875 on, were stricter in the conversion of Native Americans. *Children's Catechism* was printed in Keresan, kivas were closed, and many of the old customs were prohibited. However, in the first decade of the twentieth century, "Laguna conservatives managed to re-establish something of the old religious system" (Seyersted 11). Agriculture was the main economic activity until the 1950s, when uranium was discovered and started being mined at the Jackpile Mine near Paguete, and at the Mount Taylor, a mountain sacred for Lagunas and Navajos. The uranium extraction ended in 1982 with the decline in the price of uranium ore. The pueblo of Laguna has a well-established Tribal Law system, and they value education and intellectual activity. They also have freedom to worship as long as their religion does not interfere with the traditional religious practices and beliefs.

The Pueblo of Laguna, thus, since it is the main setting in the novel, is an important feature in the plot of *Ceremony*. It is the departure from and return to Laguna, that causes the

main conflicts in the novel. Moreover, the close relationship between Native Americans and the landscape turns the pueblo into an essential element to understanding these conflicts, which are nothing more than a reflection of the clash between Native American and Anglo-American cultures. Catherine Rainwater points out the “profound, inextricable linkages among self, community, and the physical and metaphysical dimensions of the land” (117). She explains that “[t]he story of a self emerges from the land in which the story of one’s people has arisen,” and that “when home no longer exists, the self is incomplete.” She applies this idea to Tayo’s situation saying that “[h]is recovery from illness involves nothing less than the recovery of his own story and the reintegration of this story with a larger encompassing story not only of his people, but of all people in our ancestral home which is earth” (119). Therefore, the different configurations of ‘the story’ are crucial for the comprehension of the protagonist’s healing process and the increasing awareness of his own identity. In this sense, it is the study of ‘the story’ in *Ceremony* that will help to understand such conflicts and how the Pueblo’s cultural heritage can survive at the same time it is adapted to modern situations.

In *Ceremony* there is a somewhat clear relation between the Native American fiction and the oral traditions, which is possible to acknowledge thanks to the different roles and the fluidity of ‘the story’ within the novel. Carol Mitchell emphasizes in her article “*Ceremony* as Ritual” the importance of the stories to the completion of the ‘curing’ ceremony and also to the recovery of the Laguna Pueblo traditions: “The stories are not just entertainment; they are the heritage of a people. They validate the traditions of culture, they make the past come alive in the present and they reassure that the past will continue into the future” (28). She also outlines that Tayo’s delving into the ‘old stories and traditions’ makes it possible for him to understand his heritage and find the balance in the three planes which she calls ‘the human

plane', 'the socio/cultural plane' and the 'spiritual plane'. This balance is what will prompt his cure (30).

Jerome Seymour Bruner also talks about the uses of stories in *Making Stories: Law, Literature, Life*. In his book, Bruner discusses the "narrative creation of the self", i.e., how the self is created by the stories one makes and tells. He argues that "it is through narrative that we create and re-create selfhood, that self is a product of our telling and not some essence to be delved for in the recesses of subjectivity" (85). Bruner adds later that the narratives are a way to "construct, reconstruct, in some ways reinvent yesterday and tomorrow" (93). This is closely related to the war stories Tayo's friends tell each other in the bar. Those stories are told as a way of making even, somehow, for the way they have been treated after the war was over. "Conquering" the white woman in their stories, for instance, is connected with the regaining of what they have lost throughout the years of white domination.

Sharon Holm in "The 'Lie' of the Land" discusses the relationship between the land and a national identity formation and states that

While the postwar issues in *Ceremony* are reflected, either directly or indirectly, through land concerns in light of then-current economic pressures, they are also reflected in the more "amorphous" and conceptual ideas of patriotism and national identity, both Indian and American, which originate from particular interrelated interpretations of land as both a spatial and ideological entity and material ground. (254)

And the revenge sought by Native American young men, in *Ceremony* represented by Emo, another WWII veteran, is fulfilled "via sexual conquest, which twists the figural colonial trope of land as women: 'They took our land, they took everything! So let's get our hands on white women!'" (259). Whitback et al. display the many losses American Indian people have

faced and discuss how these losses have resulted in a historical trauma among Native Americans:

The important point here is that the ethnic cleansing did not end with military defeat and occupation of territory. Rather, it persisted for generations. This means that American Indian people are faced with daily reminders of loss: reservation living, encroachment of Europeans on even their reservation lands, loss of language, loss and confusion regarding traditional religious practices, loss of traditional family systems, and loss of traditional healing practices. We believe that these daily reminders of ethnic cleansing coupled with persistent discrimination are the keys to understanding historical trauma among American Indian people. The losses are not “historical” in the sense that they are in the past and a new life has begun in a new land. Rather, the losses are ever present, represented by the economic conditions of reservation life, discrimination, and a sense of cultural loss. (121)

Likewise, Tayo comes from a place where he is constantly dealing with ‘losses’, so, as Michelle Satterlee suggests, “war is not the only origin of the protagonist's trauma because the novel emphasizes the forces of childhood abandonment and racial discrimination that contribute to his suffering” (72). Such sufferings or so-called ‘losses’ cause his displacement and only through ceremony, which puts him in direct contact with his people’s stories, nature and his own history, he is able to perceive his identity. Aaron Derosa, in “Cultural Trauma, Evolution, and America’s Atomic Legacy in Silko’s *Ceremony*” argues also that

Tayo’s statement regarding his healing process is not an isolated affair: narrative connects the individual to the broader cultural network. Silko states that stories »serve to help the individual feel constantly a part of the group so that a person will never feel remote or lost no matter the time or situation«

(Arnold 2000, 31). Narrative facilitates the normalizing of individual and communal experience because with »stories you begin to realize that what has just happened to you has happened before to different people [...]. You have this sense that there's this ongoing story and your story has become part of it« (ibid., 32). Narrative is understood as communal, generational, and therapeutic. At the same time, we will see, Silko recognizes the adaptive capacity of ceremony. (53)

Derosa also traces a parallel between the use of stories and the cure of traumas. He resorts to Freud's 'talking cure' and Kitty Klein's cognitive models to show that narratives can be influential in the healing process of PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) patients. Satterlee discusses a similar theory presented by Pierre Janet, but adds the relationship between the connection with nature and Tayo's recovery. She compares how he felt "entrapped by his memories" in the bar bathroom to his peace of mind in the following scene when he is in the natural environment (82). Through this example, we can notice clearly the relationship between nature and healing processes. Satterlee advocates that the landscape is paramount for Tayo to understand his trauma and that storytelling functions as a way of preserving "his identity because it brings together the pieces of Tayo's past within cultural and historical frameworks that help him understand the traumatic events" (82).

Louis Owens, in the same fashion, discusses in "The Very Essence of Our Lives': Leslie Silko's *Webs of Identity*" the relevance of stories for Tayo's quest. He says that "stories tell the people who tell the stories who they are. Tayo cannot be healed alone, for no one and nothing within the cosmos has its existence and meaning alone." He also points out that Tayo's openness to learn with stories is due to the influence of his grandmother and his uncle throughout his life: "Tayo has unconsciously absorbed much from those around him, especially Josiah and Old Grandma, who offer him humor as well as philosophy, and he is

ready for the teachings of the helpers that will soon enter his life” (101). Tayo can finally understand his place in the world through the knowledge of the stories told by Betonie, and the reader can benefit from these stories as well.

Denis Cutchins in "So That the Nations May Become Genuine Indian: Nativism and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*" outlines the alternative presented by Silko to issues such as 'social and cultural heritage', 'assimilationism' and 'traditionalism'.

Silko rejects the simplistic ideal that a return to traditional beliefs is the only way Native American characters can survive. Denying both traditionalism and assimilationism, she proposes that the only way Native American characters, particularly those of mixed racial and cultural heritage, will be able to survive in the modern world is to adopt a nativistic paradigm and learn to adapt and alter ancient traditions to fit modern situations. (86)

For instance, the traditional medicine man, Ku'oosh, is unable to cure Tayo with his ceremony, and only Betonie, a 'half-breed' Navajo, with his selection of modern props, presents Tayo with a ceremony capable of healing him.

Bringing to the fore a discussion on the structure of the novel, Elaine Jahner talks about the prevalence of the event structure instead of a temporal structure. According to her, "two major types of narrative shape the events in the novel and affect the way the other types interweave as they lead to different kinds of perception. These two types are the contemporary and the mythic tellings, the timeless and the time-bound narratives" (43). She goes on saying that "[r]eader and protagonist alike go from event to event trying to learn the connection between contemporary action and the mythic prototype" (45). She emphasizes the power of events, and how differently people can experience them depending on their culture. Robert Nelson, on the other hand, suggests the fragmented nature of *Ceremony*

can be treated as an example of postmodern intertextuality – a text in which two kinds of text, prose in narrative mode and embedded poetry in several modes, derive (or better yet, recover) a semblance of authority from a third, absent yet acknowledged, text: the ethnographic pretext. (3)

Although privileging the ethnographic pre-texts, according to him, might not have been the reason why Silko included the embedded texts. He also observes that *Ceremony*'s Western-looking prose seems to be the embedded text “in the sense that it is enclosed by and thus by extension and (to at least some degree) both formally and conceptually controlled by” the “text and texture” of Native story (17).

The construction of *Ceremony* in a fragmented sequence of events, containing embedded poems that, at the same time, relate the mythic content and the contemporary events in the plot, and allude to the ethnographic pre-text, turns it into a substantial object of study. Moreover, understanding how the several configurations of story function in the development of the plot, and to what extent these many stories are important for the completion of Tayo's ceremony – as well as his overcoming the PTSD and finding his place in his community, can bring valuable contributions to both the literary field and cultural studies about Native American communities. Therefore, my aim in this dissertation is to analyze the different functions and configurations of the term ‘story’ and the act of storytelling itself in the novel *Ceremony*. I intend also to examine how these stories from which the narrative is woven contribute to the protagonist's healing process and the development of self-awareness regarding his culture and identity.

In order to achieve the objectives described above, I structure my work in three chapters. The first chapter is entitled “What's Been Lost and What Hasn't: History, Cultural Trauma and War Stories.” In this part, I present a report about North American history under the perspective of Native Americans. This report is based on the works of Howard Zinn and

Peter Nabokov, and it illustrates the gradual process of disfranchisement suffered by Native Americans from colonization to recent decades. This process of disfranchisement was responsible for the feeling of loss, mainly due to the loss of the land, which leads to what Jeffrey C. Alexander calls “cultural trauma”, a trauma culturally conceived which affects a collectivity. For some Native Americans, another layer to this cultural trauma is added they come from WWII and feel they lost their status as a first-class citizen. Consequently, they start a ritual of drinking and telling war stories in order to remember the days when Anglo Americans accepted them.

The second chapter is entitled “The Story, its Forms and Functions in *Ceremony*.” In this part of my discussion, I tackle two main points: the story in the context of oral tradition and the structure of the novel. The appearance of several mythical stories, in the form of poems, embedded (and surrounding) the prose narrative, raise interesting questions about their functions and their relation to the plot. Considering that storytelling is a strong practice of Native American peoples, and how the performance of stories contributes to the preservation of cultural heritage are key elements to understand the function of these stories in the plot. In addition, I analyze the structure of the novel in order to both explicit the effects achieved by such a structure, and evaluate the classification of *Ceremony* as a postmodernist work. In this chapter, I use both structuralist and postmodernist theories as a point of departure, so that I can analyze and verify the points of convergence and divergence with those theories.

In the third chapter, entitled: “Healing through ceremony; overcoming witchery”, I focus on Tayo’s posttraumatic stress condition and how talking about his traumas helps him cope with them. I also compare the first part of Betonie’s ceremony with a therapy called NET – Narrative Exposure Therapy, used to treat patients with PTSD – posttraumatic stress disorder. Another question discussed in this chapter is the process of identity formation

triggered by Tayo's journey in order to complete his ceremony. In my discussion, I consider the "multiple subject positions" Tayo could occupy, but from which he is alienated at the beginning of the novel. Finally, I discuss the term "witchery", its significance in the novel and why Tayo needs to defeat witchery in order to complete his ceremony.

To conclude I try to show how the stories in the plot of *Ceremony*, in their many forms, are related to one another and to Tayo's journey; how they perform different functions in the novel; how the discourses of the dominant power are unmasked; and finally, how hybridity is shown as a desirable condition for cultural identity.

Chapter 1

What's Been Lost and What Hasn't: History, Cultural Trauma and War Stories

1.1 - Another Side to North American History

Howard Zinn, in the first chapter of his book *A People's History of the United States*, discusses the necessity of having a look at history from the point of view of the oppressed instead of ignoring their side of it. He affirms that “[t]he history of any country (...) conceals fierce conflicts of interest (...) between conquerors and conquered, masters and slaves, capitalists and workers, dominators and dominated in race and sex”, and that “in such a world of conflict, a world of victims and executioners” we should not “be on the side of the executioners” (17). With a similar idea in mind, Peter Nabokov organized the *Native American Testimony*, an account of half a millennium of American history from Native American's viewpoint.

According to Nabokov, when Christopher Columbus arrived at the Bahamas, North America “was well discovered” with about two to ten million people, who had an “extreme variety of political organizations, methods of food-gathering, cultural and religion patterns, and population size” (4). The native population had already established political unions, confederacies, or lived in independent, isolated groups when the Europeans set foot on shore. Moreover, they “were as culturally different from each other as the nations of Europe” (5). “Responding to the different environments of soil and climate”, as Zinn points out, they developed “perhaps two thousand different languages. They perfected the art of agriculture, and figured out how to grow maize (corn)”, and “a variety of other vegetables and fruits, as well as peanuts and chocolate and tobacco and rubber” (27). Zinn also argues that

(...) Columbus and his successors were not coming into an empty wilderness, but into a world which in some places was as densely populated as

Europe itself, where the culture was complex, where human relations were more egalitarian than in Europe, and where the relations among men, women, children, and nature were more beautifully worked out than perhaps any place in the world.

They were people without a written language, but with their own laws, their poetry, their history kept in memory and passed on, in an oral vocabulary more complex than Europe's, accompanied by song, dance, and ceremonial drama. They paid careful attention to the development of personality, intensity of will, independence and flexibility, passion and potency, to their partnership with one another and with nature. (30)

Native American trade had been very active by the time the commercial exchanges between Indians and Europeans started. Europeans were guided "to salt, tobacco, wood, and fish which they managed to harvest and ship back across the Atlantic." They also counted on the "native expertise and manpower" to "lure and trap animals" and their "techniques for skinning and soft-tanning hides." In exchange for the native commodities, "Indians received a range of new goods they quickly found indispensable: knives, the popular tomahawk, scissors, awls, needles, (...) 'demon rum' (from the English), brandy (from the French), and above all, muskets, powder, and shot" (Nabokov, 34). However, after the animals were gone, the natives had no longer the prosperity they had enjoyed from the trade with whites and became dependent on their goods (35).

Where religion was concerned, white men could not understand the impersonation of animal spirits and worshiping of natural elements as a form of religious expression. Then, the Europeans with missions, priests, ministers, and boarding schools did their best to convert natives to Christianity and "civilize" them. While in some places the priests protected their converts and even allowed a mixture of native and catholic rituals, in others, Indians would

be beaten or executed for the practice of their ceremonies. When Protestant groups came to administer the government-owned Indian boarding schools, “[t]heir efforts did more to crush Indianness than any other missionary campaign” (Nabokov 53).

However, from all the hardships and losses caused by the encounter with the Europeans, the loss of the land seems to have affected the Native American peoples more deeply. Zinn reports that “the United States government had signed more than four hundred treaties with Indians and violated every single one” (531).

Moreover, Native American peoples were not considered the owners of the land. According to Howard Zinn, John Winthrop, the governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony declared the area occupied by Native Americans legally a “vacuum”. His excuse was that “The Indians, he said, had not ‘subdued’ the land, and therefore had only a ‘natural’ right to it, but not a ‘civil right’. A ‘natural right’ did not have legal standing” (21).

When the Revolution came, the Indians had been ignored by the Declaration, which did not consider them equal, apt to choose the ones to govern American territories or able to pursue happiness. Without the presence of the British and the French, according to Zinn, “the Americans could begin the inexorable process of pushing the Indians off their lands, killing them if they resisted” (95). He recalls also the event of the smallpox epidemic among the Indians caused by a donation of infected blankets:

When that war ended in 1763, the French, ignoring their old allies, ceded to the British lands west of the Appalachians. The Indians therefore united to make war on the British western forts; this is called “Pontiac’s Conspiracy” by the British, but “a liberation war for independence” in the words used by Francis Jennings. Under orders from British General Jeffrey Amherst, the commander of Fort Pitts gave the attacking Indian chiefs, with whom he was negotiating, blankets from the smallpox hospital. It was a pioneering effort at

what is now called biological warfare. An epidemic soon spread among the Indians. (96)

Nonetheless, Zinn continues, Native Americans continued to fight until the British agreed “to establish a line at the Appalachians, beyond which settlements would not encroach on Indian territory”. Although it might explain why most of the Indians fought for England during the revolution, when British and French allies were gone, the “Americans assumed now that the Indian land was theirs.” Yet, after being defeated by Native Americans in battles such as Harmar’s Humiliation and St. Clair’s Shame and “even when General Anthony Wayne defeated the Indians’ western confederation in 1798 at the Battle of Fallen Timbers,” Americans had to recognize the power of the Native Americans and agree to “give up claims to the Indians lands north of the Ohio, east of the Mississippi, and south of the Great Lakes” under the condition that if “the Indians decided to sell these lands they would offer them first to the United States” (96-97).

However, after this, Native Americans continued to be gradually pushed off their lands. When Jefferson, in 1803, purchased the Louisiana Territory from France he “proposed to Congress that Indians should be encouraged to settle down on smaller tracts and do farming; also, they should be encouraged to trade with whites, to incur debts, and then to pay off these debts with tracts of land” (Zinn 135). Land was an indispensable element for the development of the modern capitalist economy and Indian removal from it, then, became necessary.

From 1814 to 1824, in a series of treaties with the southern Indians, whites took over three-fourths of Alabama and Florida, one-third of Tennessee, one-fifth of Georgia and Mississippi, and parts of Kentucky and North Carolina. [Andrew] Jackson played a key role in those treaties, and, according to Rogin, “His friends and relatives received many of the patronage appointments—as

Indian agents, traders, treaty commissioners, surveyors and land agents. . . .”
(Zinn 139)

When Andrew Jackson was elected President in 1829, Zinn goes on, the states of “Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi began to pass laws to extend the states’ rule over the Indians in their territory.” After this the process of disfranchisement became more vigorous. With these laws Indians were subjected to militia duty and state taxes, but could not vote, bring suits or testify in court. The laws also stripped chiefs off their powers, outlawed tribal meetings, and made tribes no longer a legal unit. “Indian territory was divided up, to be distributed by state lottery. Whites were encouraged to settle on Indian land” (143).

On May 28th, 1830, the president Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act, which established the relocation of the tribes Chickasaw, Choctaw, Muscogee-Creek, Seminole, and original Cherokee Nations from the Southern United States to federal territory west of the Mississippi River. The law passed narrowly due to the North opposition, 102 to 97, and it did not mention force, although they would not receive funds or protection if they did not move. (Zinn, 148-149) The ones who assimilated and adopted Anglo-European behavior could stay east. Most tribes migrated pacifically, except the Cherokees, who were forced to move during the fall and winter of 1838 and 1839. Approximately four thousand Cherokees died on this forced march that became known as “The Trail of Tears.”

The next step on the Indians’ removal from their land was the Allotment Act, also known as Dawes Act, in February 1887. The idea was to divide the reservations into small plots and turn family heads into American-type small farmers. According to Peter Nabokov’s account, some Native Americans were convinced that their only protection in a nation that valued individual success and property titles was a land deed. “Some Indians also suspected that allotment was not for their benefit but just another scheme for destroying their solidarity and stealing their last resource – the land their treaties granted them (...)” (234). After their

lands were divided, what was left – usually more than half of the reservation – was auctioned and sold to non-Indian speculators at bargain prices. The allotment also had other consequences for Native Americans, as Nabokov explains:

Even though their political independence was undermined, abiding ties of family and society still wove most of them tightly together. Despite official efforts to forbid their religious practices, medicine men still practiced behind closed doors and traditional ceremonies were conducted secretly. From family to clan to religious or warrior society to tribe, the individual usually came last. The prospect of single people and nuclear families looking for their own interest was new and frightening.

(...) For Indians who had avoided removal, their homelands often held sacred significance as actual locations for their myths, places where their rituals were born, and sites where their ancestors had lived and were buried.
(233)

It took over a decade for the allotment to reach all Indian territories. It took a lot more for Native Americans to be granted citizenship (it did not happen until 1924). Native population decreased from the estimated 1.5 million at the time of first white contact to 237,000 by the turn of the century, although in another few years it would grow again (Nabokov 259).

In February 1934, John Collier was named chief of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and proposed to the senate a reform in the government policy for Indians. The 52-page Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) proposed, among other things, the reorganization of Indian tribes and their self-government, an end to the allotment concept, a fund to foster Indian farms and businesses, and the recruitment of Indians for Bureau of Indian Affairs jobs. Receiving disapproving responses from both politicians and Indians, Collier was able to pass a modest version of his bill, and it became a law in June 1934, the Wheeler-Howard act. Fifteen years

after the law was passed “approximately ninety-five tribes were self-governing bodies”. Where land recovery is concerned, “only enough money was allocated to restore four million acres to the tribes, less than half that ‘urgently needed’” (Nabokov 308). However, according to Collier’s report to the senators, allotment “has cut down Indian land holdings from 138,000,000 [the acres Indians owned when the Dawes Act was passed in 1887] to 47,000,000 [the acres they had left in 1934]” (qtd. in Nabokov 308).

Collier’s program, also known as the Indian New Deal, had good results such as prosperity in farming operations and other business, decrease in Indian death rate, the construction of eighty-four day schools and the expression of their tribal heritage pride. Nevertheless, Second World War “turned the nation’s attention and finances toward military mobilization” (Nabokov 309-310). According to Nabokov “about fifty percent of all able-bodied Indians became engaged in the military or war industries (310). From the twenty-five thousand Indians that had joined the Navy, Army or Marine Corps, ten thousand died in World War II. The ones who came back could not fit their old lives in the reservations or do the menial jobs they used to. Neither could they receive the treatment the uniform provided at the time of the war. They were back to their second-class citizenship at home.

After the Second World War, with the resignation of Collier in 1945 and the nomination of Dillon S. Myer in 1950 as the new commissioner, a new Indian policy that became known as “Termination” aimed at “liquidating the special ‘ward’ status of Indians and the ‘trust’ responsibilities of government to look after their best interest – especially their lands” (Nabokov 334). In 1954, six bills related to this “Termination” passed despite the intense lobbying of the National Congress of American Indians. Native Americans were persuaded to move to big cities through a program called “Relocation”. This program consisted in Indians living in low-rent apartments or housing developments in cities such as Chicago, Los Angeles, Seattle and Detroit. “For many Indians relocation meant an

anguishing dislocation. Stories filtered back to the reservation of loneliness, alcoholism, depression, police harassment, unemployment, and crime.” Also, it was hard for them to fit in, to be part of the “mainstream of American life” (Nabokov, 336).

After Termination and Relocation, similarly to Removal and Allotment, Native Americans lost about 3.3 million acres. Besides this, as explains Nabokov, there were other serious consequences related to the quality of Indian life such as:

(...) an average death age of forty due to disease, alcoholism, and malnutrition; an infant mortality rate more than twice the national average; the highest teen and pre-teen suicide rate in America; liver disease from alcoholism five times higher than the white population, and Indians under twenty-four years of age dying from alcoholism at a rate twenty-eight times the national average; more than fifty thousand Indian families living in unsanitary shanties or abandoned cars. (358)

This grim reality, Nabokov goes on, the violation of old treaties, and the restrictions of water rights, fish and game policies gave rise, between 1964 and 1974, to a “series of demonstrations, road blockades, land takeovers, and building occupations from coast to coast amounted to a firestorm of Indian outrage against wrongs past and present” (356).

This tone of outrage can be frequently seen in *Ceremony*, since it reflects the national scene for Native Americans after World War II and displays all the issues presented above through the narrative of Tayo’s healing process. This historical context is important, in this sense, to understand how cultural trauma was developed in the Native American population and the function of War Stories for the World War II Indian Veterans.

1.2 – Cultural Trauma in *Ceremony*

The long process of subjugation, loss and disfranchisement described previously caused, on Native Americans, what Jeffrey C. Alexander calls cultural trauma. He explains that

[c]ultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways. (6)

However, this collective identity must be seen as something culturally conceived. Although “the cultural construction of collective trauma is fuelled by individual experiences of pain and suffering”, not all the painful experiences become a cultural trauma; it is necessary the creation of narratives “about social suffering, about emotions and existential threats to ethical convictions” by social groups such as politicians, intellectuals, artists and social movement leaders. The sources from social pain can come from “religion, nation, race, ethnicity, gender, and class” difference. While trauma narratives can mean “significant repairs in the civil fabric”, they can also provoke “new rounds of social suffering” (1-2). Thus, collective trauma is a social phenomenon, “a matter of symbolic construction and framing, of creating stories and characters” in which a “‘we’ must be constructed via narrative and coding, and it is this collective identity that experiences and confronts the danger” (3). These “symbolic renderings” are a reconstruction of individual suffering and actual events whose truth depends on their “symbolic power and enactment” (4).

Moreover, the sociological process of “experiencing trauma” involves different aspects such as “[t]he nature of the pain”; “[t]he nature of the victim”; “[r]elation of the trauma victim to the wider audience”; and “[a]ttribution of responsibility” (17-19 italics in the original). In this process there is the definition of a painful injury to the collectivity, the

establishment of the victim and also of the perpetrator or antagonist, and the distribution of ideal and material consequences. After traumas are experienced, imagined and represented, the collective identity will change. This change is related to a remembrance of the collective past and even a reconstruction of “the collectivity’s earlier life”. After the collective identity is reconstructed, there is a period of calm in which “the heightened and powerfully affective discourse of trauma disappears” and “the ‘lessons’ of the trauma become objectified in monuments, museums, and collections of historical artifacts” (16).

Native Americans, as exposed in the previous section, due to the loss of their territory, their constant removal by the government, their treatment as second class citizens, and the forced process of assimilation, had been through a long and continuous process of experiencing trauma by the time of Second World War. At that point, when they were called by the U.S. Armed Forces to enlist, they envisioned an opportunity of becoming part of the American Society. They would be fighting side by side with the whites. For some of them, like Rocky, for example, the army propaganda was almost impossible to refuse. In *Ceremony*, the narrator shows how the recruiting was done:

He looked disgusted then, as though he were almost ready to leave. But he went on with his speech.

“Now I know you boys love America as much as we do, but this is your big chance to *show it!*” He stood up then, as he had rehearsed, and looked them in the eye sincerely. He handed them color pamphlets with a man in a khaki uniform and gold braid on the cover; in the background, behind the figure in the uniform, there was a gold eagle with its wings spread across an American flag. (64)

They enlisted, went to the war, enjoyed what they thought was the first class-citizen treatment. For those soldiers, the uniform gave them the prestige and the treatment they had

been expecting for centuries. Most of those young men felt for the first time they were equals to the Anglo Americans. However, this so-called equality was conditioned to their fighting for the US. The narrator informs that when talking about Tayo and Rocky's first day in Oakland: an old white woman in a big Chrysler blesses them but only because of their uniforms.

The reason Tayo, the protagonist, enlisted was that his cousin Rocky insisted on it. Rocky, in *Ceremony*, represents those Native Americans who wanted to assimilate. He disregarded his people's traditions and called them old superstitions or nonsense. "He was an A-student and all-state in football and track. He had to win" (51), so he listened to his teachers and coach, and abandoned the "old ways". His mother knew what white people wanted in an Indian and saw that attitude as his only chance. Similarly to him, many other young Indians "bought" the American Army propaganda and fought in the war believing they were finally integrating the mainstream of American Society. Nonetheless, by the moment the war was over, their first-class citizenship was "revoked" in its more basic terms, as Tayo argues with his friends:

"I'm half-breed. I'll be the first to say it. I'll speak for both sides. First time you walked down the street in Gallup or Albuquerque, you knew. Don't lie. You knew right away. 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. And the white lady at the bus depot, she's real careful now not to touch your hand when she counts out your change. You watch it slide across the counter at you, and you know. Goddamn it! You stupid sonofabitches! You Know!" (42)

The Indian Veterans, then, become alienated from both spheres. They are no longer considered part of white America, nor can they return to their former places in their

communities. They occupy, then, what Homi Bhabha would call an “in-between cultures” space¹. He states that

[t]his 'part' culture, this *partial* culture, is the contaminated yet connective tissue between cultures - at once the impossibility of culture's containedness and the boundary between. It is indeed something like culture's 'in-between', bafflingly both alike and different. (...)The peculiarity of cultures' partial, even metonymic presence lies in articulating those social divisions and unequal developments that disturb the self-recognition of the national culture, its anointed horizons of territory and tradition. (56)

However, these World War II veterans cannot deal with the old treatment Native Americans were used to receiving at that time from white people. They are not willing to go back to the lives they used to live in the reservation before the war; they can hardly find a place for them in the city, among whites, either. While a few of them are able to establish a new function in the reservation, most of them spend a great part of their time in bars using their veterans' pension to buy alcohol, and telling the stories of the time they were in the army and in the war. A great majority is also suffering from what is now called Posttraumatic Stress disorder.

Bhabha also develops the idea of a “third space”, which is related to “the linguistic difference” in “any cultural performance” and the disjuncture between the one who speaks and the other who interprets the message. According to him,

[t]he pact of interpretation is never simply an act of communication between the *I* and the *You* designated in the statement. The production of meaning requires that these two places be mobilized in the passage through a Third

¹ Although Homi Bhabha discussion of “third space” and “in-between” space is related to colonialism and post-colonialism, I believe his concepts are highly important to understand the relationship between Anglo Americans and Native Americans, as well as the relationship between people in Laguna Pueblo and the Native American war veterans.

Space, which represents both the general conditions of language and the specific implication of the utterance in a performative and institutional strategy in which it cannot 'in itself' be conscious. (36)

In *Ceremony* this "third space" can be observed in the inability of the pueblo's medicine man, old Ku'oosh, of performing effectively his ceremonies on the Indian veterans. This happens for two possible reasons: they do not follow their traditions anymore, and the performance of his rituals cannot reach them because they suffer from a sickness related to "white warfare".

"There are some things we can't cure like we used to," he said, "not since the white people came. The others who had the Scalp Ceremony, some of them are not better either."

He pulled the blue wool cap over his ears. "I'm afraid of what will happen to all of us if you and the others don't get well," he said. (37-38)

Thus, these veterans, since they are in this "third space", no longer can be cured by the Scalp Ceremony. Lawrence Grossberg also employs the term "third space" in his essay "Identity and Cultural Studies: Is That All There Is?" to discuss hybridity. For him

[i]mages of a 'third space' (as in Bhabha) see subaltern identities as unique third terms literally defining an 'in-between' place inhabited by the subaltern. Images of liminality collapse the geography of the third space into the border itself; the subaltern lives, as it were, on the border. In both of these variants of hybridity, the subaltern is neither one nor the other but is defined by its location in a unique spatial condition which constitutes it as different from either alternative. Neither colonizer nor precolonial subject, the postcolonial subject exists as a unique hybrid which may, by definition, constitute the other two as well. Closely related to these two figures of hybridity is that of the '*border-crossing*', marking an image of between-ness which does not

construct a place or condition of its own other than the mobility, uncertainty and multiplicity of the fact of the constant border-crossing itself. (91-92)

Even though Grossberg is considering the individuals and their identities, while Bhabha discusses the “cultural performance” itself, both are focusing on this condition of liminality, of not belonging to either of the two spheres alone, but feeling in some ways part of both.

Hence, although Native Americans were already experiencing cultural trauma originated from their encounters with Anglo Americans and the consequent losses they had suffered, after Second World War there is a reconfiguration of the narratives of trauma due to the return of these war veterans. As mentioned previously, “for traumas to emerge at the level of the collectivity, social crises must become cultural crises. (...) It [trauma] is the result of this acute discomfort entering into the core of the collectivity’s sense of its own identity”. As trauma is constructed through narratives, it is necessary that “[c]ollective actors ‘decide’ to represent social pain as a fundamental threat to their sense of who they are, where they came from, and where they want to go” (Alexander, 2011:15). Such actors form what Alexander calls “carrier groups” or “the collective agents of the trauma process.” They “have both ideal and material interests; they are situated in particular places in the social structure; and they have particular discursive talents for articulating their claims – for ‘meaning making’ – in the public sphere.” Regardless of whether they are elites or marginalized classes, he continues, prestigious religious leaders or spiritual pariahs, someone representing the perspectives and interests of a younger generation against an older one, or even a national group pitting one’s own nation against a putative enemy, they just have to be skilled in meaning making (16).

Furthermore, it is necessary for these carrier groups to construct “a compelling framework of cultural classification” in order to represent trauma. Whereas “this is simply telling a new story”, “this storytelling is, at the same time, a complex and multivalent symbolic process that is contingent, contested, and sometimes highly polarizing.” The

function of the carrier groups, thus, it to persuade the wider audience “that they, too, have become traumatized by an experience or an event” (Alexander 17).

In *Ceremony*, the character Emo seems to be the one engaging in building this collective trauma framework. His rephrasing of the old trauma stories and his angered discourse against Anglo-American society are a reflection of the sentiment of some war Indian veterans and, therefore, very convincing to most of his listeners.

Emo liked to point to the restless dust wind and the cloudless skies, to the bony horses chewing on fence posts beside the highway; Emo liked to say, “Look what is here for us. Look. Here’s the Indians’ mother earth! Old dried-up thing!” (24)

However, Emo is not the only trauma agent. Alexander argues that

Social narratives are not composed by some hidden hand of history. Nor do they appear all at once. The new trauma-drama emerged in bits and pieces. It was a matter of this story and that, this scene and that scene from this movie and that book, this television episode, and that theater performance, this photographic capturing of a moment of torture and suffering. (65)

In this sense, *Ceremony* is also a social narrative itself. The narrator, throughout the novel keeps providing these “bits and pieces” and working this meaning making in order to sensitize the reader. The narrative keeps bringing comparisons between the events in the novel and some historical facts as a way of defining what Alexander called the “nature of the pain.” It can be seen when Tayo meets his friends Harley and Leroy in an old truck they had just bought. The narrator remarks that any courtesy from whites could only be a trap. “White people selling Indians junk cars and trucks reminded Tayo of the Army captain in the 1860s who made a gift of wool blankets to the Apaches: the entire stack of blankets was infected with smallpox” (157-158). However, Silko’s narrative seems to aim beyond the simple

construction of a social narrative of trauma. There are many instances in which the narrative appears as an attempt to raise awareness to the possibility of a new Native American collective identity. The narrative points out not only the wrongs that Native Americans had been suffering, but also the discourses drenched in the ideologies of white society, which Indians were constantly reproducing themselves.

Ideologies can be seen, according to Terry Eagleton, as a particular set of complex effects internal to discourses, producing us as social subjects (194). In this way, ideology is inherent to language itself. He also states that “[i]deology is language which forgets the essentially contingent, accidental relations between itself and the world, and comes instead to mistake itself as having some kind of organic, inevitable bond with what it represents” (200). Consequently, the one speaking may not know that s/he is reproducing an ideology. Thus, ideology “refers more precisely to the processes whereby interests of a certain kind become masked, rationalized, naturalized, universalized, legitimated in the name of certain forms of political power (202). In this fashion, oppression can only be achieved through discourse as he argues later on:

Oppression, in short, is a normative concept: someone is being oppressed not simply if they drag out a wretched existence, but if certain creative capacities they could feasibly realize are being actively thwarted by the unjust interests of others. And none of this can be determined other than discursively; you could not decide that a situation was oppressive simply by looking at a photograph of it. (207)

Even though uncountable critiques to the treatment Anglo Americans gave to Indians appear in the novel exposing the oppression they caused, Silko’s text attempts to propose an alternative that is not aiming at increasing the hatred some Native Americans already felt. The narrator tries all the time to dismantle the ideologies permeating the discourses

reproduced by both Native Americans and Anglo Americans, as we can see in the fragment below:

If he had seen the cattle on land-grant land or in some Acoma's corral, he wouldn't have hesitated to say "stolen". But something inside him made him hesitate to say it now that the cattle were on a white man's ranch. He had a crazy desire to believe that there had been some mistake, that Floyd Lee had gotten them innocently, maybe buying them from real thieves. Why did he hesitate to accuse a white man of stealing but not a Mexican or an Indian? (...) He knew then he had learned the lie by heart – the lie which they had wanted him to learn: only brown-skinned people were thieves; white people didn't steal, because they always had the money to buy whatever they wanted.

The lie. He cut into the wire as if cutting away at the lie inside himself. The liars had fooled everyone, white people and Indians alike; as long as people believed the lies, they would never be able to see what had been done to them or what they were doing to each other. (190)

Such ideologies, which the narrator calls "the lies", shaped both whites and Indians' identities, and the narrator explains that they all had been victims of those discourses that separated Anglo Americans from Native Americans and reinforced the differences between them. The narrator also uses the term "witchery", a sort of evil power used by the "destroyers" to unbalance the relationship between human kind and nature and between human beings, to explain why white people oppressed Native Americans. In addition, the "destroyers", the ones who are able to use witchery and control both whites and Indians, are the ones manipulating the oppression caused on Native Americans by whites:

(...) If white people never looked beyond the lie, to see that theirs was a nation built on stolen land, then they would never be able to understand how they had

been used by the witchery; they would never know that they were still being manipulated by those who know how to stir the ingredients together: white thievery and injustice boiling up the anger and hatred that would finally destroy the world: the starving against the fat, the colored against the white. The destroyers had only to set it into motion, and sit back to count the casualties. But it was more than a body count; the lies devoured white hearts, and for more than two hundred years white people had worked to fill their emptiness; they tried to glut the hollowness with patriotic wars and with great technology and the wealth it brought. And always they had been fooling themselves, and they knew it. (190-191)

Far from exempting the Anglo Americans from what they had done so far, the text suggests a recognition of the harm caused by them and also a reflection about their attitude towards Native American. The terms “witchery” and “destroyers”, thus, could be interpreted, respectively, as the discourses at play and the dominant power. In this sense, Silko’s text tries to unmask these ideologies, the so-called lies, and subvert the dominant power represented by the government and white elite.

Furthermore, cultural trauma is presented in many different instances throughout the novel. In the narrative it can be seen that the Indian veterans tell war stories in order to cope with the psychological trauma they suffered in the war and also the cultural trauma faced after the war.

1.3 – War Stories

Now, war ended, all I am left with are simple, unprofound scraps of truth. Men die. Fear hurts and humiliates. It is hard to be brave. It is hard to know what bravery is. Dead human beings are heavy and awkward to carry, things smell different in Vietnam, soldiers are dreamers, drill sergeants are boors, some men thought the war was proper and others didn’t and most didn’t care. Is that the stuff for a morality lesson, even for a theme?

Do dreams offer lessons? Do nightmares have themes, do we awake and analyze them and live our lives and advise others as a result? Can the foot soldier teach anything important about war, merely for having been there? I think not. He can tell war stories.

Tim O'Brien

I wanted people to understand. I wanted to share with them as nakedly and openly and intimately as possible what I had gone through, what I had endured. I wanted them to know what it really meant to be in a war—to be shot and wounded, to be fighting for my life on the intensive care ward—not the myth we had grown up believing.

Ron Kovic

“As long as there has been war, there have been authors trying to understand it and turning battlefield horrors into narrative”, Joe Woodward says in his article “The Literature of War”. According to Kate McLoughlin “[t]here is something counterintuitive about ‘the literature of war.’” She questions how war, “a phenomenon of destruction”, can “give rise to literature, an act of creation” and the “sort of fiction, poetry, or drama [that] might thrive on mass death, injury, and loss, other than the voyeuristic, the exploitative, or the simply sadistic”. She also talks about the possibility of “war writing even perpetuat[ing] war, glorify[ing] violence, and obscure[ing] suffering” (xi). The conclusion she reaches is that:

War literature does all of these things. It also warns against pursuing armed conflict, exposes its atrocities, and argues for peace. It records the acts of war with as much accuracy as is possible, and it memorializes the dead. It is voyeuristic, exploitative, and sadistic; it is also tender, selfless, and comforting. It is gleeful and angry; inflammatory and cathartic; propagandist, passionate, and clinical. It is funny and sad.

The literature of war is a literature of paradoxes, the greatest of which is the fact that it comments continuously on its own failure. War writers often lament their incapacity to describe the realities of armed combat, the inexpressible nature of the subject matter, the inadequacy of language, and the inability of their audiences to understand. (xi)

However, in stating what makes war impossible to describe, they end up describing their memories of it. As O'Brien informs in the epigraph of this section, there is not much left to the war veteran other than tell war stories.

Even though *Ceremony*, a novel written by the end of Vietnam War and set in the period after World War II, has some war stories in its plot, the Indian veterans seem to have different motives to narrate them. While war veterans normally want to share their experiences, or to understand what happened to them, or even to work their traumas out by reconstructing what happened via narrative, the Native American World War II veterans shown in the novel use the war stories to cope with the postwar cultural trauma. Gathering in a bar, getting drunk and telling war stories is a way of feeling again they are part of American society.

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. They never thought to blame white people for any of it; they wanted white people for their friends. They never saw that it was the white people who gave them that feeling and it was the white people who took it away when the war was over. (42)

Telling war stories, as it is shown in the novel, can be considered a cultural performance in the terms proposed by Jeffrey Alexander et al. in their article "Cultural Pragmatics: Social Performance between Ritual and Strategy." According to them "[c]ultural performance is the social process by which actors, individually or in concert, display for others the meaning of their social situation." It does not matter that this is not their actual social situation, since "[t]his meaning may or may not be one to which they themselves subjectively adhere; it is the

meaning that they, as social actors, consciously or unconsciously wish to have others believe.” What counts for the effectiveness of their display is a plausible performance by the actors, “one that leads those to whom their actions and gestures are directed to accept their motives and explanations as a reasonable account” (Scott and Lyman 1968; Garfinkel 1967; qtd. in Alexander et al.:32). Thus, for the performance to be successful, the actors must be able “to convince others that [their] performance is true, with all the ambiguities that the notion of aesthetic truth implies” (32). In the case of the young Indian veterans, Tayo’s friends, they had to convince one another and themselves at the same time, so they could fight the pain they felt after the war was over by remembering their “glorious times.”

They are, in fact, trying to recover their sense of belonging, or rather what they understood for belonging to American society. For them “[b]elonging was drinking and laughing with the platoon, dancing with blond women, buying drinks for buddies born in Cleveland, Ohio” (43). The act of telling war stories, then, becomes a ritual as the narrator points out: “They repeated the stories about good times in Oakland and San Diego; they repeated them like long medicine chants, the beer bottles pounding on the counter tops like drums” (43). Their stories all have the same theme, the same elements and they can be classified, according to Alexander et al., as “cultural texts.”

If cultural texts are to be communicated convincingly, there needs to be a process of cultural extension that expands from script and actor to audience. Cultural extension must be accompanied by a process of psychological identification, such that the members of the audience project themselves into the characters they see onstage. (34)

When they ask Tayo to tell a story, Tayo breaks with the process of psychological identification, because he talks about the painful side they all want to forget. Instead of

engaging in the ritual-like stories of talking about bar service and white women, he describes their journeys from second class citizens to first class citizens and back:

“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 streets 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: Wake Island, Iwo Jima. They got the same medals for bravery, the same flag over the coffin.” Tayo stopped. He realized the others weren’t laughing and talking any more. They were listening to him and they weren’t smiling. (...) “No! No. I didn’t finish this 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.” (41, 42)

Although Tayo’s story talks about the same themes, it goes further in unraveling, with sarcasm, the feelings Indian veterans were trying to forget.

As Alexander et al. inform, “[p]erformances in complex societies seek to overcome fragmentation by creating flow and achieving authenticity. They try to recover a momentary experience of ritual, to eliminate or to negate the effects of social and cultural de-fusion” (56). When they told their stories, they ceased to feel as if they were disposable, and went back to the times where they felt like equals to white people. It was as though telling those war stories over and over again, was going to restore the way things were at the time of the war. “Speaking epigrammatically, one might say that successful performances re-fuse

history”. Even though Native Americans have a long history of unequal treatment and loss, we can assume those performances intended to “break down the barriers that history ha[d] erected – the divisions between background culture and scripted text, between scripted text and actors, between audience and *mise-en-scène*” (56). This effort can be seen in the fragment below, in which a Native American veteran becomes the narrator of the novel and tells his story about the war time.

White women never looked at me until I put on that uniform, and then by God I was a U.S. Marine and they came crowding around. (...) They never asked if I was Indian; sold me as much beer as I could drink. I was a big spender then. Had my military pay. Double starch in my uniform and my boots shining so good. I mean those white women fought over me. (40-41)

The acceptance by white women in these stories represented an important element in their status as American citizens. It shows they are good enough to be desired by white women. Nevertheless, they tried to ignore the fact that what attracted those women to them was their military pay and the possibility of a stable life. Furthermore, women in their stories are objectified as if having intercourse with them could be a sort of compensation for the losses they suffered, including the loss of the land:

“We fought their war for them.”

“Yeah, that’s right.”

“Yeah, we did.”

“But they got *everything*. And we don’t got shit, do we? Huh?”

They all shouted “Hell no” loudly, and they drank the beer faster, and Emo raised the bottle, not bothering to pour the whiskey into the little glass any more.

“They took our land, they took everything! So let’s get our hands on white women!” (54-55)

Their objectification, however, can be seen as a reflex of the process of alienation suffered by Native American women. Native American women were led to behave as white women, but their inability of coping with this fragmented identity made them alienate themselves from their community without achieving the acceptance they expected from white society.

A clear example of this phenomenon is Tayo’s mother, Laura or Little Sister, who changes her behavior because of the influence of her teacher and missionary people, and abandons her family to try and live like Anglo Americans. “When Little Sister had started drinking wine and riding in cars with white men and Mexicans, the people could not define their feeling about her”. The problem was beyond “the drunkenness and lust”. As Native Americans think themselves as a collectivity, “the people felt something deeper; they were losing her, they were losing part of themselves.” Consequently they had to rescue her:

The older sister had to act for the people, to get this young girl back.

It might have been possible if the girl had not been ashamed of herself. Shamed by what they taught her in school about the deplorable ways of the Indian people; holy good missionary people who wanted only good for the Indians, white people who dedicated their lives to helping the Indians, these people urged her to break away from her home. She was excited to see that despite the fact she was an Indian, the white men smiled at her from their cars as she walked from the bus stop in Albuquerque back to the Indian School. She smiled and waved; she looked at her own reflection in windows of houses she passed; her dress, her lipstick, her hair – it was all done perfectly, the way the home-ec teacher taught them, exactly like the white girls. (68)

In this sense, she was lured with the same promises of integrating mainstream American Society as the young Native American soldiers. However, at the moment when she tries to act like the white girls, she is not seen as such by white men. She is objectified and treated as if she were disposable. Then, she is rejected by whites due her promiscuous behavior. Also, she can no longer return to life in the reservation, as much as those WWII Indian veterans could not be part of their communities. “She hated the people at home when white people talked about their peculiarities; but she always hated herself more because she still thought about them, because she knew their pain at what she was doing with her life.” (68) When Native American women acted like Little Sister, another layer was added to the cultural trauma inflicted on Native Americans. Another important part of their identity was changed.

Native American women who followed Little Sister’s path had their individual identity shattered, and, like the WWII Indian veterans, started to occupy this “in-between cultures” space, this “third space” where they felt incompatible to both cultures, Indian and White alike. “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.” For her people it seemed a simpler task: they “wanted her back. Her older sister must bring her back.” However, “when they failed, the humiliation fell on all of them; what happened to the girl did not happen to her alone, it happened to all of them.” (68) Thus, when those young veterans told their stories about how many white women they had at the time of the war, they could be claiming that the loss of Indian women was avenged.

1.4 – Not Everything is Lost

Despite the numerous factors responsible for Native Americans’ cultural trauma, and the war stories as a way of World War II Indian veterans to cope with such trauma and their “in-between cultures” feeling, *Ceremony* seems to aim beyond the simple display of the

postwar context. Through the experiences of Tayo's character, the novel shows an alternative way of seeing the Native American postwar condition:

The dreams had been terror at loss, at something lost forever; but nothing was lost; all was retained between the sky and the earth, and within himself. He had lost nothing. The snow-covered mountain remained, without regard to titles of ownership or the white ranchers who thought they possessed it. They logged the trees, they killed deer, bear, and mountain lions, they built their fences high; but the mountain was far greater than any or all of these things. The mountain outdistanced their destruction, just as love had outdistanced death. The mountain could not be lost to them, because it was in their bones.
(218)

Therefore, although Native Americans had been constantly removed, the colonizers explored exhaustively the land and killed the animals to the point of extinction, they would never be able to destroy the Native Americans relationship with nature, with the land, the animals and plants; unless Native Americans denied their heritage themselves. This relationship between Native Americans and nature implied deep respect, and despite the fact that they explored the land for their survival, they did it sustainably, without exhausting their resources.

Above all, Silko's text does not seem to suggest a separation between Native and Western cultures, and the rejection of what comes from white society. It rather proposes the rescue of Native American tradition in its totality and its valorization in detriment of the super-valorization of "the white things they admired and desired so much – the bright city lights and loud music, the soft sweet food and the cars" (203-204). If Native American communities were able to recognize this connection with the land, to value their culture and traditions, to use the resources that come from western society without being enslaved by them, maybe it would be possible for them to overcome their cultural trauma.

Chapter 2

The Story, its Forms and Functions in *Ceremony*

2.1 - “In the beginning was the word”: Salvaging Cultural Heritage through

Performance

And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night.

Genesis 1:3-5

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

(...)

Thought-woman, the spider, named things and as she named

Them they appeared.

Leslie Marmon Silko

A point of convergence among all cultures is that, whether or not they have a writing system, orality has a paramount role in their forms of communication. According to Walter Ong, “[t]he basic orality of language is permanent” (7). Although writing is nowadays deeply rooted in our society, to the point that orality itself is strongly influenced by it, some cultures still have not acquired a writing system. Some scholars call them a primary oral culture, even though a “primary oral culture in the strict sense hardly exists, since every culture knows of writing and has some experience of its effects” (Ong 11). Thus, for some cultures, even if they have had any influence from writing at all, orality is still the path through which knowledge and tradition are passed on from generation to generation.

Instead of considering these cultures primitive, we must acknowledge that they have a different way of producing thought and spreading knowledge, and make some considerations on how it works. Firstly, as Ong adds, although all thought is, to some extent, analytic, i.e. “it breaks its materials into various components”, “abstractly sequential, classificatory, explanatory examination of phenomena or of stated truths is impossible without writing and

reading”. Thus, individuals in primary oral cultures learn by apprenticeship, discipleship, listening and repeating what they hear, among other methods, but they do not “study in the strict sense” (8). Secondly, according to him, “oral peoples commonly, and probably universally, consider words to have great power”. They even “consider words to have magical potency (...) tied in, at least unconsciously, with their sense of the word as necessarily spoken, sounded, and hence power-driven”, while chirographic and typographic people (people belonging to cultures with writing and print) “tend to think of names as labels, written or printed tags imaginatively affixed to an object named” (32-33). Thirdly, “[s]ustained thought in an oral culture is tied to communication” (34). Therefore, he continues, thoughts must be “memorable”, and follow certain patterns to be remembered and transmitted.

In a primary oral culture, to solve effectively the problem of retaining and retrieving carefully articulated thought, you have to do your thinking in mnemonic patterns, shaped for ready oral recurrence. Your thought must come into being in heavily rhythmic, balanced patterns, in repetitions or antitheses, in alliterations and assonances, in epithetic and other formulary expressions, in standard thematic settings (the assembly, the meal, the duel, the hero’s ‘helper’, and so on), in proverbs which are constantly heard by everyone so that they come to mind readily and which themselves are patterned for retention and ready recall, or in other mnemonic form. Serious thought is intertwined with memory systems. (34)

Finally, Ong goes on saying that thought and expression in a primary oral culture tend to be: “(i) Additive rather than subordinative”; “(ii) Aggregative rather than analytic”; “(iii) Redundant or ‘copious’”; “(iv) Conservative or traditionalist”; “(v) Close to the human lifeworld”; “(vi) Agonistically toned”; “(vii) Empathetic and participatory rather than

objectively distanced”; “(ix) situational rather than abstract” (36-49). It means that “oral folk” will prefer to use conjunctions such as “and”, qualify the nouns, implement repetition, preserve what has been learned, talk about the listener’s world and its hardships through practical situations in a way that the listener can relate to it.

Moreover, according to Ong, differently from chirographic cultures where the text is responsible for organizing thoughts as a whole, “[i]n primary oral cultures, where there is no text, the narrative serves to bond thought more massively and permanently than other genres” (138-139). Therefore, knowledge and tradition in primary oral cultures or residually oral cultures acquire the form of narrative in order to be passed on. Such narratives are transmitted through performance such as storytelling events and rituals. Even though storytelling and ritual are also found in literate cultures, their significance for oral peoples is intimately related to the survival of their cultural heritage.

In Leslie Marmon Silko’s novel *Ceremony*, the reader can observe that stories, which carry the cultural memory of Laguna People, are key elements in the performance of the rituals, mainly the ceremony Tayo goes through in order to overcome his traumas. The novel starts with an introductory poem that describes *Ceremony* as a story created by Thought Woman, the deity responsible for the creation of the Universe and this world, according to Laguna mythology:

She is sitting in her room thinking of a story now

I’m telling you the story she is thinking.

Ceremony

I will tell you something about stories,

[he said]

They aren’t just entertainment.

Don’t be fooled.

They are all we have, you see,
 all we have to fight off
 illness and death.

You don't have anything if you don't have the stories.
 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. They would like that. They would be happy. Because
 we would be defenseless then. (1)

The poem acknowledges the importance of stories to preserve Pueblo's traditions and their community as a whole. It recognizes the function of stories as both entertainment, and as means of curing illnesses and preventing death. The poem, thus, creates the atmosphere of a storytelling event in which the reader will take part. Moreover, it places *Ceremony* as a piece of Laguna Pueblo's mythology.

Kristin M. Langellier and Eric E. Peterson, in *Storytelling in Daily Life: Performing Narrative*, present storytelling, a phenomenon that is strong even in literate cultures, as being performance and performative:

Storytelling is performative in that possibilities for our participation are marked out in advance, so to speak, by the discourse and by our material conditions. Stories also live after as well as live before performance. When we participate in storytelling, whether as storytellers or audiences, we reenact storytelling as a conventionalized form of communication as well as collaborate in the production of a unique story or performance. This storytelling event recites, recalls, reiterates previous storytelling events in general and in particular. In brief, storytelling is socially and culturally reflexive. Storytelling is not a natural form of communication but a habitual

and habituating practice. However, because it is reflexive, any particular storytelling event has the potential to disrupt material constraints and discourse conventions and to give rise to new possibilities for other storytelling events and for how we participate in performing narrative. (4)

Oral narratives, in this way, at the same time they are repeated during every storytelling event, they are unique, since every performance comes full of new possibilities. Ong states that oral narratives are not verbatim (using the exactly same words as were originally used), although they maintain a “formulaic structure” (63). Thus, although there is this appearance of sameness, oral narratives may vary a little at every new performance.

This particularity of performances is discussed also by Diana Taylor, who argues that such events are part of a “repertoire”, i.e. “acts usually thought as ephemeral” such as “embodied memory-performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing”, etc. She contrasts the idea of a repertoire with what she calls “archive”, or the “supposedly stable” items like documents, maps, literary texts, archeological remains, bones, videos and cds. “The repertoire requires presence – people participate in the production and reproduction of knowledge by 'being there,' being a part of the transmission” (20), and differently from the archive it does not remain the same. She also explains that the live performance cannot be captured by the archive and might disappear in some cases. However,

[p]erformances also replicate themselves through their own structures and codes. This means that the repertoire, like the archive, is mediated. The process of selection, memorization or internalization, and transmission takes place within (and in turn help constitute) specific systems of re-presentation. Multiple forms of embodied acts are always present, though in a constant state of again-ness. They reconstitute themselves-transmitting communal memories,

histories, and values from one group/generation to the next. Embodied and performed acts generate, record, and transmit knowledge. (20-21)

In the plot of Silko's novel it is possible to see the replication of some performances as well as the transcription of clan stories, which appear in the form of poems, embedded in the body of the novel and closely related to the storyline. The recurrence of Laguna Pueblo mythology seems to be an act of salvaging the cultural heritage of their community and also of showing its importance for the recovery from cultural trauma.

Furthermore, the act of telling stories in order to perform a ritual is recurrent in *Ceremony*. Early in the novel, the medicine man Ku'oosh, when called to help Tayo by doing the scalp ceremony, starts the ritual with a story.

He 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. His language was childish, interspersed with English words, and he could feel shame tightening in his throat. (34)

This passage suggests that in order to perform the ritual successfully, the knowledge of their people must be shared, the story of places, things and the origin of the words and phrases themselves must be explained. Old Ku'oosh had to explain the story behind each word to avoid mistakes in their meaning.

Therefore, as we can see in the novel, myths must be "accurately" (although stories may vary from one performance to another) transmitted through ritual and storytelling. Claude Lévi-Strauss, in *Myth and Meaning*, discusses the meaning of myths and their importance for primary oral cultures. Similarly to Ong, Lévi-Strauss acknowledges the difference between the thought people produce in primary oral cultures and the one cultures

that count on writing and print produce. In *Myth and Meaning*, he compares and contrasts scientific thinking and myth, and explains how both have the same function, i.e. to control the environment:

We are able, through scientific thinking, to achieve mastery over nature—I don't need to elaborate that point, it is obvious enough—while, of course, myth is unsuccessful in giving man more material power over the environment. However, it gives man, very importantly, the illusion that he can understand the universe and that he *does* understand the universe. It is, of course, only an illusion. (6)

Although, as Lévi-Strauss argues, this control over the environment is “an illusion”, Silko's novel demonstrates the importance of myths and their transmission to the maintenance of the relationship between Native Americans and nature. The narrator shows the influence of Europeans on the lives and behavior of people in the pueblo, and how this influence disturbed the harmony that existed among them. The influence of science, writing, and print are also mentioned, though not always as negative elements. Nevertheless, the novel makes it clear that the problems Native Americans face are related to the fact that they forgot or disregarded their traditions, and that they would be able to overcome their difficulties only if they recovered their traditions, myths, stories and rituals.

In addition, myth and history appear side by side in *Ceremony*, even though they perform different functions in the novel. While myth is essential in the performance of rituals and in the completion of Tayo's ceremony, the historical events are vital to set the tone of the novel, whose plot goes around the post-World War II scenario and the consequences of the European colonization in the lives of Native Americans. Lévi-Strauss traces a parallel between history and mythology by saying that “in our own societies, history has replaced mythology and fulfils the same function.” However, while in societies without writing or

archives “the aim of mythology is to ensure that as closely as possible—complete closeness is obviously impossible—the future will remain faithful to the present and to the past”, our society seeks a future different from the present, “some difference depending, of course, on our political preferences” (18). Moreover, both history and myth are transmitted by means of the construction of a narrative, even though historical narrative has the aid of the archives to be formed and becomes an archive itself after being written. Myth, on the other hand, lives through performance and throughout time acquires some variations from one performance to another.

This difference can be observed in *Ceremony*, where myth and historical events are, in some instances, intertwined. When the narrator talks about the relationship between Tayo and Auntie, and her fear “at being trapped in the oldest ways”, a description of how it used to be in “the oldest times” is contrasted with the events of European colonization and the conversion to Christianity:

An old sensitivity had descended in her, surviving thousands of years from the oldest times, when people shared a single clan name and they told each other who they were; they recounted the actions and words each of their clan had taken, and would take; from before they were born and long after they died, the people shared the same consciousness. The people had known, with the simple certainty of the world they saw, how everything should be.

But the fifth world had become entangled with European names: the names of the rivers, the hills, the names of the animals and plants – all of creation suddenly had two names; an Indian name and a white name. Christianity separated the people from themselves; it tried to crush the single clan name, encouraging each person to stand alone, because Jesus Christ

would save only the individual soul; Jesus Christ was not like the Mother who loved and cared for them as her children, as her family. (68)

European influence is shown here as negative and even harmful. In addition, performances are regarded as the element that unified their clan, and secured the survival of their culture. The hierarchical gap between history and myth, observed in Western society, disappears. Myth, which is related to oral tradition and performance, has the same status as the historical events, usually relied upon because of the materiality of the archives from which narrative history is based on. However, not only in the fragment above, but also in other parts of the novel, myths are shown as prime as historical events to the understanding of Native American culture, and historical events assume the structure of myths when they are told in a performance.

Moreover, the dichotomies between myth and history, myth and science or Native American beliefs and Christianity are usually mediated by the narrator, and the portrayal of the characters' behavior and discourse throughout Silko's novel. Instead of simply stating that Native Americans should go back to their clan stories and reestablish their connection with nature, the narrator shows different points of view in order to suggest a reflection on the clash between Western and Native cultures.

Such phenomenon is discussed by Marcus Hartner under the term "multiperspectivity". He explains that multiperspectivity "seems to be particularly suited to stage perceptual relativism and skepticism towards knowledge and reality". He also talks about a distinction made between the "open" and the "closed" forms of multiperspectivity, in which the "open" form comprises "the presentation of entirely incompatible points of view", whereas the "closed" one is "the depiction of perspectives which, despite their differences, can still be integrated into a coherent account of the story" (electronic file). He goes on saying that

Such ‘closed’ forms seem to be particularly suited to stage the relative or limited nature of individual viewpoints, while at the same time creating a dominant voice that provides an authoritative account of the narrated events. The form thus tends to ultimately support traditional philosophical notions of intersubjective truth, reality, or knowledge. ‘Open’ forms of multiperspectivity, on the other hand, are marked by an overall quality of dissonance, contradiction and dialogism (...). They usually feature discordant, sometimes kaleidoscopic arrangements of conflicting perspectives which cannot be resolved and therefore often possess an implicitly subversive or alienating quality. (electronic file)

In the case of *Ceremony*, the closed form of multiperspectivity seems to have been used as a way of suggesting an alternative for the Native Americans’ condition of liminality in North American society. This condition of liminality, as discussed in the previous chapter, has to do with the sentiment of individuals who identify themselves with two different spheres at the same time, although they feel like they do not belong to either of them, occupying, then, an “in-between” space. Through the presentation of multiple point of views, *Ceremony*’s text shows how to cope with this sentiment without fostering the anger against whites or promoting the idea of assimilation.

These multiple perspectives, thus, are constantly displayed in the novel and, in many instances, are related to the performances of stories and rituals. First, there is the ineffectiveness of Ku’oosh’s scalp ceremony, which is performed the same way as it would be performed before the contact with whites. He admits that the old rituals are unable to cure the harm caused by “white man” warfare, in which a warrior does not know how many men he killed, or even if he killed anyone at all.

“There are some things we can’t cure like we used to,” he said, “not since the white people came. The others who had the Scalp Ceremony, some of them are not better either.”

He pulled the blue wool cap over his ears. “I’m afraid of what will happen to all of us if you and the others don’t get well,” he said. (37)

If we observe things through this point of view it is possible to see that some Native Americans know that some of the old rituals are incompatible with their reality after the contact with Europeans.

In order to present a contrast to this perspective, further in the novel, there is the presence of Betonie, the Navajo medicine man, who was referred to Tayo by old Ku’oosh. Betonie can adapt the old rituals and recognize the new dimensions of Native Americans’ lives. Betonie criticizes in his discourse the illusion some of the people in the reservation have about the immutability of the performance of ceremonies. Although he concedes that “tampering” with rituals can cause great harm, he asserts that the change in rituals began a long time before and rituals have been changing from generation to generation. Betonie also acknowledges that the presence of white people has shifted the elements in their world and this change requires new ceremonies. Because of this he has “made changes in the rituals. The people mistrust this greatly, but only this growth keeps the ceremonies strong” (126). This necessity of change was taught by his grandmother, who was also a healer.

Through Betonie’s account of his grandfather and grandmother’s story, the reader can see that the necessity of change was observed a long time before by both his grandfather Descheeny, a well-known Navajo medicine man, and his grandmother, a Mexican girl who let herself be made captive and taken to the old medicine man. She wanted to learn and make changes in the old ceremonies in order to prevent the harm caused by witchery. Descheeny foresees the appearance of the girl and already knows what she is there for before she

mentions her ideas of change. He had already started making these changes in the ceremonies when she arrived.

(...)He had already been watching the sky before she came, the planets and constellations wheeling and shifting the patterns of the old stories. He saw the transition, and he was ready. Some of the old singers could see new shadows across the moon; they could make out new darkness between the stars. They sent Descheeny the patients they couldn't cure, the victims of this new evil set loose upon the world. (150)

However, it is through the Mexican girl, a hybrid individual, that an effective ceremony could be created. Betonie, recognized as hybrid by the color of his eyes (which were hazel), is chosen by his grandmother to continue to perform the new ceremonies. Thus, it can be observed from Betonie's perspective that this condition of hybridity, not only a characteristic of the so-called half-bloods, but also of the Native Americans after their contact with the Europeans, required an adaptation of the old rituals, since they should be able to cure new illnesses.

A third perspective is shown through Rocky and Aunt's behavior, which is displayed to exemplify those who sought assimilating and achieving success among whites. Rocky aims leaving the reservation and integrating mainstream of American society. He focuses on his academic life in high school and trades the traditions of his people by the scientific knowledge he acquired from the books. Stories and rituals are nothing but nonsense to him, and he feels ashamed to see his family performing them. When they go hunting he reproaches Tayo for covering the deer's head with a jacket, an act of respect, before they gut it. He turns away from them when his uncle Josiah and his father perform the ritual of the deer, which consisted in sprinkling cornmeal on its nose to feed its spirit. They did that "to show their love and respect, their appreciation; otherwise, the deer would be offended, and they would

not come to die for them the following year” (50). Even though Rocky knew about the ritual, for him it was incompatible with what he had been learning at school.

He was embarrassed at what they did. He knew when they took the deer home, it would be laid out on a Navajo blanket, and Old Grandma would put a string of turquoise around its neck and put silver and turquoise rings around the tips of the antlers. Josiah would prepare a little bowl of cornmeal and pace it by the deer’s head so that anyone who went near could leave some on the nose. Rocky tried to tell them that keeping the carcass on the floor in a warm room was bad for the meat. He wanted to hang the deer in the woodshed where the meat would stay cold and cure properly. But he knew how they were. All the people, even the Catholics who went to mass every Sunday, followed the ritual of the deer. So he didn’t say anything about it, but he avoided the room where they laid the deer. (51-52)

Rocky’s perspective reflects a western posture towards primary oral cultures. For them, most of the time, these cultures are considered “primitive”, and their thought and knowledge obsolete. There is also a patronizing attitude, which consists in promoting the “civilization” of these cultures by teaching them the colonizer’s language, offering them formal academic education, and converting them to Christianity (whether to Catholicism or Protestantism), so that they could “evolve.”

While Rocky’s assimilation is achieved through education, Auntie’s is related to religion. Auntie is a “Christian woman” and she conducts herself in a way that will attract the sympathies of the people in the Pueblo for the sacrifices she has made for her family: “Those who measured life by counting the crosses would not count her sacrifices for Rocky the way they counted her sacrifices for her dead sister’s half-breed child” (29). Thus, she raises her nephew and takes care of him when he comes back from the Veterans hospital, expecting the

Pueblo citizens to gossip about it and reinforce her Christian reputation. Her way of assimilating Christianity mirrored also some of the western values, which were based on individuality, and the rewards received for hard work.

Auntie's actions are a stark contrast to Josiah's, for example. Josiah, her brother, kept the old traditions, rituals, prayers, and values. When he sees Tayo, who was then a child, killing flies because his teacher said they carried diseases, he tries to show Tayo, by telling him a story, the importance of respecting nature and keeping the balance that existed in it.

Tayo let the willow switch slide out of his hands. He stared at it on the floor by his feet. "What will happen now?" he asked in a choked voice.

"I think it will be okay," Josiah said, poking at the dead flies with the toe of his boot. "None of them were greenbottle flies – only some of his cousins. People make mistakes. The flies know that. That's how the greenbottle fly first came around anyway. To help the people who had made some mistakes." He hugged the boy close. "Next time, just remember the story." (101)

This lesson is not only about forgiveness, but also about the way Laguna Pueblo people thought. They saw each other as a part of the clan, and each individual was equally important to them, similarly to the flies, which were of great importance to the environment. In addition, Josiah is portrayed as someone who is not afraid of change, and not against differences. His relationship with Night Swan, a Mexican woman who lived near the Pueblo for a while, and his investment in the speckled cattle, a hybrid breed of cattle that was supposed to be more resilient in case of droughts, are examples of his openness.

Finally, it is from the perspective of Tayo's character that the reader is provided with instances in which it is possible to maintain their traditions despite Western influence. Tayo's journey to complete his ceremony shows that through performance the maintenance of Native

American Cultural heritage becomes viable. The performance of rituals and the stories contained in them raise Tayo's awareness of the meaning and importance of Laguna traditions. There is also the focus on witchery, the evil forces that unbalance the world, instead of blaming white people for all the problems Native Americans had.

It [witchery] would work to make the people forget the stories of the creation and continuation of the five worlds; the old priests would be afraid too, and cling to ritual without making new ceremonies as they always had before, the way they still made new Buffalo Dance songs each year. (249)

To defeat witchery, it was necessary to remember the old stories, but with the help of new ceremonies. As mentioned before, every new performance brings new elements, although they pass on the myths and rituals of a culture. And Tayo's story, at the end of the novel, had to be performed in the kiva for the elders, making it part of their tradition as well.

2.2 – The Narrative Text in *Ceremony*: Story, Events and Plot

For one thing, we know that narrative in all its forms is a dialectic between what was expected and what came to pass. For there to be a story, something unforeseen must happen. Story is enormously sensitive to whatever challenges our conception of the canonical. It is an instrument not so much for solving problems as for finding them. The plight depicted marks a story's type as much as the resolution. We more often tell stories to forewarn than to instruct. And because of this, stories are a culture's coin and currency.

Jerome Bruner

Seymour Chatman, in *Story and Discourse*, draws a diagram displaying the structure of narrative texts. In this diagram he breaks down a narrative into its basic elements, showing each element's components. According to him, whose studies were based on the Structuralist theory, the narrative text is composed by "story", i.e. *what* is being told, and "discourse", which consists in *how* it is told. In addition, the story is formed by "events" (actions and happenings) and "existents" (characters and setting), while the discourse consists in "the structure of narrative transmission" and its "manifestation" (verbal, cinematic, balletic, pantomimic, etc.). Chatman also describes the story as the "content" of the narrative text and the discourse as its "expression" (26).

He goes on explaining that the array of events constitutes the plot, and that the arrangement of these events is operated by the discourse. In addition, the order of this arrangement does not need to “be the same as that of the natural logic of the story.” The function of the plot, he adds, “is to emphasize or de-emphasize certain story-events, to interpret some and to leave others to inference, to show or to tell, to comment or to remain silent, to focus on this or that aspect of an event or character” (43).

When we observe the structure of the novel *Ceremony*, it is possible to see that the plot was presented in a different manner from “that of the natural logic of the story”. Robert Nelson refers to this difference pointing to the presence of embedded texts throughout the novel.

From a formal critical perspective, one of the most intriguing things about *Ceremony* is the recurrent presence of embedded text – passages set apart from the surrounding prose narrative and typeset to look more like poetry than prose: center justified on the page, surrounded by white space, and oddly skeletal-looking in the context of the margin-to-margin prose preceding and succeeding them. Most of these parcels of embedded text are also in narrative mode, styled to read like old-time, traditional oral narrative – what at Laguna Pueblo, they often call “hama-ha[h]” stories, long-ago far-away stories. (13)

Nelson maps these embedded texts, and compares and contrasts them to the ethnographic versions in an attempt to show the differences between embedded texts and pre-texts and the meaning of such differences in the context of Silko’s prose narrative.

Similarly, Elaine Jahner seeks to highlight the connection between the events in the prose narrative and the “mythic tellings.” She states that “[t]he two are not independent of each other in that they constantly shape each other” and that the prose “carries forward the contemporary realizations of the meaning stated in poetic sections” (43). However, when

Jahner talks about event structure, although she claims that the term “event” is a basic unit of narrative structure, it has, in her text, a more profound meaning than the simple “actions and happenings” Chatman had in mind. She focuses, in her essay, on the significant events that shape Tayo’s path to recovery and how they were experienced in light of the mythic text. In addition, she says that

[t]hrough the narrative events of the novel, protagonist and reader gradually learn to relate myth to immediate action, cause to effect; and both reader and protagonist learn about the power of story itself. The reader seeks to learn not only what happens to Tayo, but also why and how it happens. The whole pattern of cause and effect is different from most novels written from a perspective outside the mythic mode of knowledge. To employ myth as a conscious literary device is a quite different thing from employing the mythic way of knowing as the basic structural element in a novel as Silko does. (49)

Thus, what both Nelson and Jahner do is explicate the meaning of the mythic texts in relation to the contemporary narrative about Tayo, discussing the peculiar structure of the novel in the process.

Nevertheless, I would argue that, although both authors provide us with an extremely thorough analysis relating poetry and prose texts in the novel, there is more to the structure of *Ceremony* than they accomplish to explain. First of all, besides the appearance of the embedded texts and many instances of flashbacks, we can see two parallel narratives along the storyline of the novel: Tayo’s coming of age², which happens before the war, and his journey to recovery after the war. Neither of these two narratives is sequential, yet both of

² The term “coming of age” here is used to mean the transition from childhood to adulthood, or the time when someone is considered an adult by the community where s/he is inserted. This new status is usually related to sexual maturity, religious responsibilities and legal rights as an adult. I chose the term because it translates Tayo’s experiences right before the war. Although *Ceremony* can be seen as a coming-of-age novel, the term is not used, in any instance, to refer to the literary genre.

them have a somewhat defined timeframe presented through the time references interspersed in the prose narrative. This timeframe is seasonal, the events are presented in relation to the months and seasons, and to the influence the weather has on them. Each reference of time, thus, is accompanied by information about the weather. At the beginning of the novel the narrator reports that “the wind had blown since late February and it did not stop after April. (...) Now it was late May, and when Tayo went to the outhouse he left the door open wide, facing the dry empty hills and the light blue sky” (10). Throughout the novel, as the months and seasons pass, the land recovery from six years of drought mirrors Tayo’s healing process. Tayo’s journey lasts about one year, and the difference between his health before and after the ceremony is reflected in the climate and the land. “A year ago he [Tayo] and Harley had ridden down the road on the burro and mule, but this time the grass along the road was green and thick, and to the east, south, and west, as far as he could see, the land was green again” (234). Robert C. Bell, in “Circular Design in *Ceremony*,” and Edith Swan, in “Healing via the Sunwise Cycle in Silko’s *Ceremony*” both discuss this cyclical aspect of Tayo’s journey, although they present different perspectives on it. While Bell emphasizes the hoop as a symbol of transcendence (he discusses the uses of hoops in rituals), and the structure of the novel as an analogy of this symbol, Swan focuses on the geographic aspect of the journey, relating it to the seasons, and argues that Tayo goes on a sunwise cycle (west/north/east/south) in order to complete his ceremony. According to her, movement “starts from ‘down’ middle at Laguna Pueblo; then serially, Tayo is treated in the west (Gallup), north (Chuska Mountains), east (Mount Taylor), and south (Cañoncito)” where the last part of his ceremony is completed after he faces witchery and prevents it from stopping his story (324).

However, neither Bell nor Swan acknowledges the importance of the parallel narrative of Tayo’s coming of age to the completion of his ceremony. It is the fragmented presentation

of the development of Tayo's character, from childhood to adulthood, that makes it possible for the reader to understand that the path he follows is as much related to learning as it is to remembering old lessons. In this sense, the structure of Silko's novel operates in three different levels: the present actions, the past actions, and the homologous (borrowing the term from Nelson) mythic texts.

Secondly, Jahner's claim that the prose text in *Ceremony* is event-structured is not much accurate to describe the structure of the novel. Even if we think of event as the "event experienced" by both Tayo and the reader, as she suggests, we will realize that many of the important events in the plot come in fragments, and some of them are scattered throughout the novel. For example, Rocky's death's account starts on pages 11 and 12, but it is finished only on pages 43 and 45. Other events such as the confrontation between Emo and Tayo, in which Tayo stabs Emo with a broken bottle, or even the first event in the novel, which is Tayo and Harley's trip on mule and burro, respectively, to get to the nearest bar, are also fragmented and distributed in the first half of the novel. What seems to happen is that some of the fragments that compose the prose narrative work as the memories of Tayo during a given event. And, similar to thoughts and memories, the fragments succeed one another in a non-hierarchical order, according to the way they were remembered.

Another aspect regarding these fragments is that the ones related to Tayo's coming of age are intimately linked to the places he visits in the present. As an example we have the episode when, while riding along with Harley, he has sunstroke and passes out. Right after the passage that tells the moment when he wakes up in the canyon, there is one containing a memory of a time he went there with his uncle Josiah. However, the memory is not merely of a moment he was at that same place, but of something he learned while he was there.

"These dry years you hear some people complaining, you know, about the dust and the wind, and how dry it is. But the dust and the wind are part of life too,

like the sun and the sky. You don't swear at them. It's people, see. They're the ones. The old people used to say that droughts happen when people forget, when people misbehave." (46)

Then, after the lesson Josiah teaches Tayo, comes the first part of the mythic text about the departure of Nau'ts'ity'i, the mother, who leaves because people misbehave, and takes the plants and the rainclouds with her. Nelson comments on these sections saying that "the merger of land and story in personal vision is good medicine" and that "in the novel, this process seems to create the condition which enables the embedded text to emerge" (78).

Thus, the fragmentary nature of the novel does not mean a disconnection between the events in *Ceremony's* plot. On the contrary, it demonstrates a close relationship among all of them.

Furthermore, Tayo's story is rendered similarly to Ku'oosh's Scalp ceremony, every aspect of it must be explained, so every element in the plot of *Ceremony* comes with a story. While the main narrator focuses on Tayo's point of view, it is not uncommon that from one fragment to the other the point of view changes and that it even becomes a first person narrative. Sometimes the section comes between quotation marks, as if the characters are telling their stories themselves. It can be seen when the characters of Night Swan and Helen Jean appear in the novel, and even when Betonie talks about his grandmother. Therefore, Silko's novel presents a polyphony of voices, giving different perspectives about Tayo's story and about all the elements that compose it.

Finally, the relationship between prose and poetry texts in the novel extends beyond the simple analogy, or homology according to Nelson, between the mythic stories and the events, past and present, in Tayo's story. The intertextuality in Silko's novel works at many different levels. It can be noticed when T'se talks about the stars and Tayo look out the window seeing the star pattern Betonie drew to him on the ground. After he sees the stars he had been looking for since Betonie performed his ceremony, an image of Betonie's drawing

is shown on page 178. The pattern of stars was one of the elements Tayo had to pay attention to in order to find the stolen spotted cattle: “He [Betonie] was drawing in the dirt with his finger. ‘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’ (152). When he went north after the cattle, whose path was always southwards, he did not expect “to find anything more than the winter constellation in the north sky overhead; 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” (186). The same star pattern appears again when Tayo goes back to T’sé’s ranch to take the cattle home:

He stepped through the low doorway into the back room where they had slept together. The curly goat hides and the blankets were gone. The bare plaster floor was swept clean. But on the north wall of the room there was an old war shield hanging from a wooden peg set into the white clay wall. He did not remember seeing it before. It was made from a hide, elk or maybe buffalo, heavy and stiff enough to stop stones and arrows; long dry years had shrunk and split the edges, and it had lost the round shape. At first he thought the hide had turned black from age, but he touched it and realized it had been painted black. There were small white spots of paint all over the shield. He stepped back: it was a star map of the overhead sky in late September. It was the Big Star constellation old Betonie had drawn in the sand. (213)

However, Betonie’s star pattern is not the only reference to stars at this part of the novel. Tayo’s search for the cattle is introduced by the mythic text about the magician Kaupata, the Gambler, who stole the rain clouds and hid them in his house in the mountains, and Sun Man who goes there with the help of Spiderwoman to rescue them.

As Nelson observes, in both texts the protagonists have to look for constellations, although Tayo has to find the Big Star pattern, while Sun Man must guess about Orion and the Pleiades. Nelson also explains that Kaupata's riddle was not difficult at all, since "[a]t that time of year, in these latitudes, the Pleiades and Orion appear to emerge in the east and travel upwards to the south, Orion following behind the motion of the Pleiades" (32). These were the constellations Tayo had been looking at until T'se shows him the Big Star pattern. There is even a reference to the motion mentioned above when he is looking for the cattle, and dawn is breaking: "In the night sky above the clearing, Orion had fallen over the south edge; he was running out of night" (193).

Besides the analogy between Tayo and Sun Man, we can observe that the names of the two star clusters in the Laguna myth are western in origin. It is possible to see also that, to an extent, Laguna and Greek mythology are related when we notice that both Kaupata and Orion have their eyes taken, and that Orion and Kaupata's eyes form the autumn stars when they ascend to the sky. Another connection between Orion (myth and constellation) and Silko's text is the recurrent motif of "the hunter" in this part of the novel (Orion is known to be a giant huntsman, who pursued the Pleiades and was killed for threatening to hunt down all the beasts on earth). In *Ceremony*, in order to find the spotted cattle, Tayo goes to mount Taylor, which used to be a place where Lagunas hunted. Besides that, Tayo remembers it by the story of a hunter who found a mountain-lion cub and had it playing as long as he sang a song. The mountain lion is also related to hunters since it is believed to be both "the hunter" and the "hunter's helper" (Silko 196). In addition, it is after his encounter with the mountain lion that Tayo spots the speckled cattle. The mountain lion is also the reason why the two cowboys patrolling Floyd Lee's farm leave Tayo alone so they could hunt it. These are only a few examples of how "the hunter" motif appears in this section of the novel.

Hence, the polyphony mentioned before is also linked to this hybridism of texts. John Emory Dean discusses this polyphony when he talks about the rescue of Josiah's cattle.

According to him,

[h]is [Tayo's] experience adds new elements to the story, and such additions keep the story alive in the changing world. His recovery of the spotted cattle is a recovery of his earlier-neglected hybrid identity. Both he and the spotted cattle demonstrate the need for polyphonic rather than pure hybrid expression. The Pueblos must negotiate among competing voices and incorporate them into the Pueblos' claims to knowledge. (161)

The "story" he mentions is "the continuing story of native survival", which has now Tayo as its protagonist. Dean continues saying that "by achieving a balance among Mexican, white and native discourses, and thereby resisting hierarchical structures of domination, the changing racial demographics in New Mexico will not separate people from one another." Therefore, this polyphony, i.e. all the stories that compose *Ceremony* either in poetry form or in the prose fragments, which work together to form the plot where Tayo's story unravels, becomes a necessary narrative device to convey the hybridity of Native American condition.

2.3 *Ceremony* as a Postmodernist Novel

Not only Robert Nelson, but also other critics refer to *Ceremony* as a postmodernist novel. If we consider the date it was published, at the time postmodernist and poststructuralist ideas were flourishing, and some of the aspects mentioned in the section above about its structure, we will have no doubt about it. However, there are some considerations to make before we call Silko's novel postmodern.

Steven Connor in his book *Postmodernist Culture* discusses postmodernism and its relation to literature. He takes into consideration postmodernism as emerging out of

modernism, and postmodernity and its emergence out of modernity. He analyzes the works of Jean-François Lyotard, Frederic Jameson and Jean Baudrillard in order to amount the characteristics of postmodernism and postmodernity. He summarizes Lyotard ideas in *The Postmodern Condition*, emphasizing the shift from grand narratives (metanarratives), i.e. a form of narrative that is “the principal way in which a culture or collectivity legitimates itself” (29), which “are dominated by one language-game”, to micronarratives, which consist in “a multitude of different, incompatible language-games, each with its own untransferable principles of self-legitimation” (32). Connor highlights that “the postmodernism debate itself exhibits signs of the same functional equivalence between the consolidation of a system, and the fostering of plurality within it” (43).

When he deals with Jameson’s texts, he gives an account of postmodernism in light of Marxism. Although he accuses Jameson of not offering evidences of the tendencies he displays, he points out that, according to Jameson, “the circulation or pastiche of multiple styles in postmodernist cultural forms mimics the actual tendency in contemporary social life towards the fragmentation of linguistic norms” (44). There is also

that pure and random play of signifiers which we call postmodernism, and which no longer produces monumental works of the modernist type, but ceaselessly reshuffles the fragments of preexistent texts, the building blocks of older cultural and social production, in some new and heightened bricolage; metabooks which cannibalize other books, metatexts which collate bits of other texts. (Jameson qtd. in Connor 47)

Despite his criticism about Jameson’s failure “to achieve the high ground of critical detachment”, he acknowledges that “Jameson’s work provides the most suggestive account to date of the difficult and uneven relationship between postmodernist culture and socio-economic postmodernity” (49).

To complement the concept of postmodernity (or postmodernities as in the chapter's title), Connor assesses the theories of Jean Baudrillard about the "symbolic exchange", "simulation" and "simulacrum". Symbolic exchange in primitive society, according to Baudrillard, "maintains social stability and reciprocal relations, between man and nature by never allowing the process of exchange to be blocked, cornered or constrained to produce profit." Moreover, symbolic exchange has "subversive potential", since it "can only take place among the disenfranchised groups in modern society, among those who do not form part of the code of general exchangeability: blacks, ethnic minorities, women, youth, the old" (54-55).

After that, Connor displays a "synopsis of the four stages through which representation has historically passed on its way to the condition of pure simulation", which Baudrillard based in the idea that "[w]e live in an age (...) in which signs are no longer required to have any verifiable contact with the word they allegedly represent." The stages are, respectively: "the sign 'is the reflection of a basic reality'"; then it "masks and perverts a basic reality"; after that it "masks the *absence* of a basic reality", and finally "the sign 'bears no relation to any reality whatsoever: it is its own simulacrum'" (qtd. in Connor 55-56).

He goes on explaining Baudrillard's "oddly powerful hypothesis" that "the incessant production of images with no attempt to ground them in reality," and "the cult of immediate experience, of raw intense reality, is not the contradiction of the regime of simulacrum, but its simulated effect." This hypothesis leads "to the claim that all of contemporary life has been dismantled and reproduced in scrupulous facsimile." However, this simulation does not take the form of unreality, but of what Baudrillard called "hiperrealidad", i.e. "manufactured objects and experiences which attempt to be more real than reality itself" (56-57).

Connor concludes relating the works and theories of these three scholars with one another, and with the concept of postmodernity:

In this contraction of the distance between reality and theory, Baudrillard's work comes close to Lyotard's and Jameson's. In Lyotard's aestheticization of knowledge via the agonistics of language-games, in Jameson's anxious awareness of the loss of critical distance between culture and theory and, at its most extreme, in Baudrillard's adaptive transformation of theory itself into the condition of simulation that it theorizes, what began as an attempt to specify the relationship between the fixed and distinct poles of postmodernity in social and economic life and postmodernism in cultural life ends by dissolving the boundaries between the two realms. For all these writers, postmodernity may be defined as those plural conditions in which the social and the cultural become indistinguishable. (61)

In his conclusion he also emphasizes the “inhibition of awareness of the ways in which diagnoses of postmodernism partake of the field they describe” and he calls it a “troubled perspective” necessary “to understand the role of theory itself in the production of the postmodern”. Then, he departs to the analysis of postmodernism in the other fields such as “architecture, art, literature, the performing arts and the electronic media” (61- 62).

When tackling postmodernism and literature, he focuses on the transition from modernism, as a literary genre, to postmodernism. He discusses mainly the works of Ihab Hassan, Alan Wilde, W.V. Spanos, Brian McHale, and Linda Hutcheon. For Hassan “there is no absolute break between modernism and postmodernism, since ‘history is a palimpsest, and culture is permeable to time past, time present, and time future’ (qtd. in Connor 111)”, although there are some “terms in which postmodernism may be seen as opposed to modernism rather than a reformulation of it” (111). Hassan then, displays a diagram contrasting the two movements on what they seem to be opposites. Connor points out that “Hassan here has to rely upon this binary logic to promote the very things that appear to stand

against binary logic, the ideas of dispersal, displacement and difference” (112). Among the characteristics of postmodernism that Hassan presents in his diagram are the “antiform (disjunctive, open)”, “anarchy”, “process/performance/happening”, “participation”, “decreation/deconstruction”, “antithesis”, “absence”, “dispersal”, “combination”, “rhizome/surface”, “misreading”, “antinarrative”, “polymorphous/androgynous”, “irony” and “indeterminacy”. Hassan’s point is that “the postmodernist era is marked by a radical decomposition of all the central principles of literature, the falling into deep questionability of critical ideas about authorship, audience, the process of reading, and criticism itself” (113).

Wilde, on the other hand, argues that “the principle of irony, that term which, encompassing technique and cast of mind simultaneously, allows for the articulation of opposing attitudes and contradictory forms together” is what contains the disorder in both modernism and postmodernism (114-115). Nonetheless, while irony is “disjunctive” in modernism, in postmodernism he calls it “suspensive”, in the sense that it

marks an intensification of the awareness of incoherence, to the point where it seems no longer capable of being accounted for and contained even in the ordering frames of the aesthetic, along with a decline in the need for order, and consequent lowering of organizational intensity. (115)

Wilde also highlights the “willingness to live with uncertainty”, “to tolerate” and “welcome a world” that can be at the same time random, multiple and even absurd, whose organization consists “in local, temporary structures, which operate without reference to secret or final causes” (115-116).

In addition to these points of view, there is Spanos discussion about the modernist vision of the text as a “timeless unity.” He contrasts it with postmodernism saying that “[p]ostmodern literature breaks from this by emphasizing the contingent flow of temporality at the expense of the atemporal stasis of metaphysics” (118). After that, Connor presents

McHale's ideas about "the ontological character of the postmodernist novel", i.e. the lack of a concern about how the world is, "[i]nstead, the worlds summoned up by literary texts are grounded simply in their own textual mechanisms; subjectivity gives way to textuality" (125).

At last, Connor presents Hutcheon's theory in contrast to Hassan's and McHale's. Hutcheon defends that "the most characteristic form of postmodernism literature" is "historiographic metafiction", since postmodernism "involves the re-angling of literary self-reflexiveness back to real, historical world." He says that, according to Hutcheon

[t]he link between text and world is reformed in postmodernism, not by an effacement of the text in the interests of a return to the real, but by an intensification of the textuality such that it becomes coextensive with the real. Once the real has been rendered into discourse, there is no longer any gap to be leapt between text and world. (127)

He goes on commenting on the fact that Hutcheon, similarly to other postmodernist theorists, "welcomes the crossing of generic or disciplinary boundaries, the infiltration of history into literature and the blurring of the distinction between literature and theory." He ends the chapter with the claim that postmodern literary theory should be interpreted by "assessing its discursive effects", i.e. looking what it does, rather than "only attending to the manifest *content* of" it.

After observing all the characteristics presented in Steven Connor's compilation of postmodernism and postmodernity, it is possible to compare and contrast Silko's novel with the theories presented. Firstly, the easy identification of *Ceremony* as a postmodern novel is due to its structure and its fragmented nature. The inclusion of ethnographic texts in the form of poetry is related to Jameson's ideas of the construction of the text out of "the fragments of preexistent texts", and the tendency towards the fragmentation of linguistic norms.

The presence of two parallel narratives and the analogous mythic text, which is related to the “anarchy”, “disjunction” and “combination” existent in postmodern texts, is another evidence in favor of classifying Silko’s novel as postmodern. Moreover, we can see also the “historiographic metafiction” claimed by Hutcheon, when we look at the instances in which narrative mingles with historical accounts in *Ceremony*’s text. Also, as it was mentioned before, historical events and mythic texts seem to work at the same level in the novel, instead of been hierarchically arranged with history figuring as fact and myth as fiction.

However, far from presenting a “distortion” of such events and the exposure of the fictional character of the novel, as Hutcheon suggests, the historical events are presented as means of contextualizing the reader and presenting the causes for the cultural trauma experienced by the characters as well as Native Americans. I would argue that Silko goes on the opposite direction of some postmodernist writers, since her text does not seem to aim at this “unmasking” of reality, but on the contrary, it attempts to demonstrate that all stories – mythic stories, war stories, the characters’ personal stories, Laguna Pueblo stories, Native American historical accounts and, mainly, Tayo’s story – are all connected.

Another element of postmodern works, the polyphony of voices, is undeniable even in the poetry sections. For example, as Nelson points out, there are many voices, working at different levels, in the first three pieces of the four-piece poem that opens the novel. As these pieces aim to invoke the atmosphere of oral performance, we can see an “I” telling the story Ts’its’ tsi’ nako is thinking to “you”, the story is *Ceremony*. However, the presence of “[he said]” implies that the previous “I” is a male narrator and that his narrative is being told by another narrator, which generates a “third level of narrative.” Then, there is the phrase “*What She Said;*” which appears in italics and with capital initials as if in a title. The following text is aligned on the right, differently from the center-justified poem above it, and there is in it

another “I”, that stands for this feminine voice. The last verse, “that’s what she said,” seems also to imply another narrator (39-45).

Rather than using the postmodernist theory, we can explain the appearance of these many levels of narrative by recalling storytelling events, as Nelson suggests. Such events are performed by the storyteller, who tells the words of others. We know that somebody who was present at this event is now telling what the storyteller, the male narrator introduced by the phrase “[he said]”, told about the origin of *Ceremony*. And there is also another frame, which is the one in which speaks the narrator of the printed text. The effect expected here seems to be the placement of Tayo’s story as a piece of oral tradition and the reader as the spectator in a storytelling event.

Furthermore, *Ceremony* was written in a moment when Native American literature was being shaped, as Native American writers increased their production. Elvira Pulitano points out, in the introduction to her book *Toward a Native American Critical Theory*, that Native American literature is “a literature in which a traditional oral rhetoric is still very much apparent”, and which requires a literary theory “that brings to light Native ways of articulating the world and that uses indigenous rhetorics along with the instruments of Western literary analysis” (3). She goes on defending that Native American criticism must function with western theories, in order “to forge a Native voice within the major critical discourse” (6). In this sense, the authors she selected

emphasize a reading of theory that reveals unique characteristics by allowing the Native oral tradition to speak for itself about its nature and various functions, providing the tools, concepts, and languages necessary to a discussion of Native American literature, and adding to the rhetorical systems of Western critical theory. By bringing the liberating and extraordinary vitality of the spoken word onto the written page, these authors suggest in their own

ways how the oral tradition can inscribe its own theories of its nature, function within the elaborate hermeneutical systems of the Western tradition, and, ultimately, demystify the curious notion that theory is the exclusive province of Western thought. Instead of taking a resisting stance toward theory, as many scholars have argued should be done, the above-mentioned authors are now “resisting theory” from within, forging identity out of rupture and inevitably remapping the boundaries of theory itself. (6-7)

Therefore, even though many literary critics see *Ceremony* as another instance of a postmodernist work, because of some points of convergence with postmodern theory, I would argue that this analysis would not be sufficient to describe Silko’s novel as a whole, since what Pulitano calls the “Native ways of articulating the world” and the “indigenous rethoric” require a more encompassing kind of criticism.

2.4 A Story Made of Stories

Returning to Elaine Jahner’s claim that *Ceremony* has an “event structure”, I would like to propose, similarly to her idea of a novel structured by events, that Silko’s novel tells a story made of stories. The integration of the stories in *Ceremony* is symbiotic, and contributes to a better comprehension of Tayo’s story and Native American tradition.

Admittedly, the structure of *Ceremony* is, in some ways, challenging due to the polyphony of voices that all these stories create. Nevertheless, it is this challenge that makes the reader turn the page after each new story in order to make the connections and find how Tayo’s story ends. It is similar to the spectators of a storytelling event, eager to hear the stories even if they have heard them before. This is one of the effects created by *Ceremony*’s structure: the sensation of participating in a storytelling event. Silko’s novel presents itself as one of the makings of Thought-woman, the mother and creator of all things, as the other

“time immemorial stories”. Thus, it is not surprising that at the end of *Ceremony*, when Tayo tells his story in the kiva, he makes it part of Laguna’s oral tradition, part of its “repertoire.”

Moreover, the ingenious structure of Silko’s novel is sometimes classified as a postmodernist novel. Although there are some evidences that relate *Ceremony* to other postmodernist texts, there are others that points to other directions. In this sense, not only Silko’s novel, but also other Native American works, would require a literary theory that encompasses western literary criticism and Native American rhetoric as well.

Chapter 3

Healing through ceremony; overcoming witchery

The only cure
I know
is a good ceremony,
that's what she said.
Leslie Marmon Silko

3.1 – PTSD and the Healing Power of Stories

Even though the term PTSD – posttraumatic stress disorder – came into fashion only in the 1980's, it is far from being a recent phenomenon. Also, the connection between posttraumatic stress symptoms and war combatants has been defined by other names since American civil war. As Penny Coleman observes,

[d]uring the American civil war, it was called “irritable heart” or “nostalgia.” In the First World War, it became “shell shock,” “hysteria,” or “neurasthenia.” During World War II and the war in Korea, it was “war neurosis,” “battle fatigue,” or simply “exhaustion.” When veterans started coming home from Vietnam, it was at first called “Post-Vietnam syndrome.” (19)

According to Coleman, it is only after the publication of the third edition of the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-III), in 1980, that “posttraumatic stress disorder” became a theoretical term. She divides the manifested symptoms into three clusters: “[t]he first, the intrusive cluster, includes recurrent, uncontrollable recollections of the traumatic event, such as frightening dreams or flashbacks,” which tend to feel as though they were real to the sufferers, making them behave as if they were in the remembered situation; “[t]he second, the avoidance cluster, includes attempts to avoid circumstances that might trigger such recollections or flashbacks,” and as a consequence some of the sufferers isolate themselves; “[t]he third, or hyper-arousal cluster,

involves difficulty sleeping, violent outbursts, and an exaggerated startle response,” causing the individual to react as if they were in imminent danger (21). Despite the high frequency of traumatic experiences among survivors, what characterizes the diagnosis of PTSD is the duration of the symptoms mentioned above. According to Elizabeth A. Hembree and Edna B. Foa, “[t]rauma survivors commonly experience high levels of PTSD symptoms in the immediate aftermath of an event, and then show a decline in their symptoms over time, especially in the first three months” (178). The persistence of the symptoms after four weeks is the criterion (according to the DSM) for the acute form of the disorder, whilst the recurrence of PTSD symptoms after three months is the chronic form of it.

However, Hembree & Foa argue that “the majority of survivors recover from traumatic experiences via natural processes and without need for intervention”. Thus, psychotherapeutic treatments should consider our “natural recovery processes” and facilitate them (178-179). To overcome these traumatic experiences, they continue, it would be necessary a “repeated activation of the trauma memory through engagement with trauma-related thoughts and feelings, talking about the trauma with others, and being confronted with situations, activities, or objects that serve as reminders of the trauma.” The two authors go on pointing out that “[o]pportunities to share the story of the traumatic experience with other people, as well as to re-evaluate assumptions and emotional responses, all help the survivor organize the traumatic memory and achieve a realistic perspective” (181).

Conversely, as Elke Geraerts observes, “trauma has a special impact on the way in which memories of the traumatic event are organized,” consequently “traumatic memories are unique because they are mainly perceptually processed, causing fragmentary storage of the trauma memories” (78). She also asserts that

a patient’s recounting of a trauma is often far from perfect, with missing details, many repetitions, and a chaotic recollection of the exact temporal order

of events. Moreover, trauma victims often experience these fragmentary qualities in the form of intrusive re-experiences of the trauma, flashbacks, nightmares, and bodily sensations. (...) If these theories are correct, and PTSD is a disorder resulting from fragmented memory, then the clinical implications are profound. Such theories suggest that treatment of PTSD should focus on the elaborating, organizing, and integrating of fragmented, non-verbal aspects of memory. In that way, a verbal, integrated form of the trauma narrative can be attained. (79)

Hence, the theories mentioned above about the fragmented character of trauma memory and the benefits achieved by sharing the story of traumatic experiences contributed to the development of a treatment called Narrative Exposure Therapy (NET).

Maggie Schauer et al. explain how this treatment addresses the sociopolitical aspects of healing via the construction of a narrative of traumatic memory. According to them, “[o]nly through an externalization of the feelings, abuse, and distrust, will true healing occur. Postconflict peace and reconciliation hinge on both a willingness of members of society to open their eyes to the abuse, and on the mental health of the individual.” In this sense, they continue, “narrative exposure therapy (NET) serves to address both the health of the individual, as well as society, based on the philosophy that these systems are inherently interrelated”, and it “works at the level of the individual by encouraging the telling of the trauma story and by reliving the past traumatic sceneries within an imaginative exposure design” (3). The aim is to build a coherent narrative using the recollections and fragments, causing the sufferer to relive those traumatic events, though they must not lose their connection with the present moment. They also highlight that

[a]s narratives are an integrative part of every culture, NET is a culturally universal intervention for the reduction of traumatic stress symptoms in

survivors of serious and repeated life-threatening events, such as organized violence, torture (...), war, rape, civil trauma, and childhood abuse. (3)

The methodology of NET consists in encouraging the traumatized individual to tell their life history chronologically and in detail, so that a psychotherapist can integrate these traumatic memories into narrative. The three authors also point out that “[d]escribing personal experiences in detail facilitates an internal visual recollection of, and thus exposure to, traumatic memories.” Since there is a reflection on the individual’s life as a whole, a sense of personal identity might be achieved by the end of the process. In Leslie Marmon Silko’s novel *Ceremony*, it is possible to see that a similar process is mediated by the medicine man Betonie.

In Silko’s novel, the protagonist Tayo, after coming back from World War II, is sent to the Veteran’s hospital suffering from symptoms of what has been recently called posttraumatic stress. However, he had already been sick long before coming back. At the time he was told to fire Japanese soldiers made prisoners, he was unable to pull the trigger, he sweats and confuses one of the soldiers with his uncle. After that “[t]hey forced medicine into” his mouth. “They called it battle fatigue, and they said that hallucinations were common with malarial fever” (7). At the hospital, Tayo, both because of sedation and the seriousness of his trauma, withdraws from any kind of social contact and does not even talk to his doctors. The narrator describes his state as being “white smoke” or invisible: “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” (15). His state, then, corresponds to the second cluster of symptoms, that is, the avoidance of memories of the traumatic events and numbing of general responsiveness. Only after the arrival of a new doctor was he able to speak again. The new doctor “came each day, and his questions dissolved the edges of the fog, and his voice sounded louder every time he came.

The sun was dissolving the fog, and one day Tayo heard a voice answering the doctor” (15). After that Tayo is sent home, although the posttraumatic symptoms persisted. Along with the nightmares, flashbacks, difficulty to sleep and violent outbursts, Tayo suffered from physical sickness, like constant vomiting and prostration. Also, his condition became chronic, since its symptoms exceeded the three-month criterion mentioned above.

In spite of the white doctors’ recommendations, Old Grandma decides to send for a medicine man, when she realizes that Tayo’s health showed no improvement after his return home. The Pueblo’s medicine man, Old Ku’oosh, unable to treat Tayo, refers him to a Navajo medicine man, Betonie, known to perform different ceremonies. While he was inside Betonie’s hogan in the first night of the ceremony, Tayo has the chance to talk about his traumatic experiences, and have his memories assessed. Although Tayo does not tell his stories in detail, Betonie listens to him, giving him a different perspective on the traumatic events and the persons involved, and helping him face and cope with them.

The first event Tayo tells Betonie is about the time when he sees the image of his uncle Josiah in one of the Japanese soldiers that he was supposed to execute. Despite the fact that he knows his uncle could not possibly be there, he cannot escape the feeling that it was him he was about to shoot. Betonie reminds him that historically both peoples shared a common ancestor: “[i]t isn’t surprising you saw him with them. You saw who they were. Thirty thousand years ago they were not strangers” (124). Besides, Tayo fails to see the Japanese as enemies, since there is not a complete self-identification with the Anglo Americans whom he fights for, and the enemies look too much like people in his pueblo.

Another event that contributed to Tayo’s condition was Rocky’s death. Not only did Tayo have to carry Rocky’s wounded body through the excruciating march (the Bataan Death March), but also he had to watch when a Japanese soldier shot Rocky on the head because he was too weak. When Betonie asks him about Rocky, he cannot speak at first, the memories

make him cry. Nevertheless, later he is able to describe the reasons why Rocky's death is so painful, and how he felt in debt with his family for "letting" Rocky die.

In this part of the ceremony, Tayo is able to talk about his mother, his hybrid condition, Emo and his disgust at both whites and Indians, western warfare and even his fear of going back to the Veterans hospital. Even though this first moment of the ceremony looks a lot like a psychotherapy session, Betonie's analysis of the events reported by Tayo are based on Native American thoughts, traditions and stories. He even criticizes the treatment Tayo and other veterans received at the hospital saying that "[i]n that hospital they don't bury the dead, they keep them in rooms and talk to them" (123).

The ceremony continues, then, with Betonie's stories about ceremonies and the way they have changed, about witchery, and the stories of his grandparents. He also discusses with Tayo about the sentiment of loss Native Americans felt (described in the first chapter as the cause of cultural trauma). Moreover, there are in this section of the novel some texts displayed as poems, which can also be attributed to Betonie. The first text is the story of Shush, his helper, who strayed from his family's sight and ended up with the bears. Then, there is a story of how white warfare came upon the world, and after a story of a man who became a coyote. The reader also finds in this section another segment of "Fly and Hummingbird's" story.

In the light of this, we can see that Betonie's ceremony benefits from the use of stories in different ways. First, when Tayo narrates the events related to his traumas, with the help of Betonie, he can finally cope with them. Second, the stories of Shush and the man who became a coyote illustrate Tayo's condition of liminality and exemplify how the transition back to recovery must be made slowly, step by step. Then, there are the stories related to ceremonies, which treat them as ever-changing and all-encompassing. According to Betonie's grandparents' stories, ceremonies must adapt to the shifts that happen throughout time, and

Tayo's struggles are part of a larger system. "His sickness was only part of something larger, and his cure would be found only in something great and inclusive of everything" (125). Finally, the fragment of "Fly and Hummingbird's" story is an analogy for Tayo's ceremony. While the ceremony for purifying their town could not be completed without tobacco, Tayo's ceremony would be completed only after he found the elements Betonie tells him about: the cattle, the woman and the pattern of stars.

Ultimately, the several narratives brought together during Betonie's ceremony, enable Tayo not only to cope with his traumas, but also to understand better his condition of liminality. Both processes contribute immensely to raise Tayo's awareness of his own identity.

1.2 – Completing the Ceremony: A Journey towards Identity

Victor Turner in his book *The Ritual Process* shows different types of ritual and their significance for different cultures. Similarly to Walter Ong and Levi-Strauss, he advocates that "in matters of religion, as of art, there are no 'simpler' peoples, only some peoples with simpler technologies than our own. Man's 'imaginative' and 'emotional' life is always and everywhere rich and complex." He adds that it is not "entirely accurate to speak of the 'structure of a mind different from our own.' It is not a matter of different cognitive structures, but of an identical cognitive structure articulating wide diversities of cultural experience" (3).

Further in his book, Turner examines the idea of liminality in the context of rituals, discussing Arnold van Gennep's theory about "*rites of passage*." Such rites are defined as "rites which accompany every change of place, state, social position and age". To Van Gennep "all rites of passage or 'transition' are marked by three phases: separation, margin (or *limen*, signifying 'threshold' in Latin), and aggregation" (qtd. in Turner 94). Turner explains

that the phase of separation indicates the detachment of the individual or group from a fixed place in the social structure, “from a set of cultural conditions (a ‘state’),” or both. The second phase is related by a ritual subject with ambiguous characteristics, the cultural realm he goes through has little or nothing to do with the past or coming state. “In the third phase (reaggregation or reincorporation), the passage is consummated.” Turner uses the term “state” in contrast with the term “transition” in order to employ a concept that is more inclusive than “status” or “office”, “and refers to any type of stable or recurrent condition that is culturally recognized”. Once the ritual subject is in a relatively stable state again, he “has rights and obligations;” “he is expected to behave in accordance with certain customary norms and ethical standards binding on incumbents of social position in a system of such positions” (94-95).

Furthermore, according to Turner, the condition of liminality implies ambiguity, i.e. liminal individuals “elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space.” They are in “between positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial. As such, their ambiguous and indeterminate attributes are expressed by a rich variety of symbols in the many societies that ritualize social and cultural transitions.” Liminality, in this sense is related “to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality, to the wilderness, and to an eclipse of the sun or moon. (95)”

Even though the ceremonies in Silko’s novel are more related to rituals of recovery, we can see that Tayo is in the second phase of the structure presented by Turner, the liminal condition. It is required of him to complete the ceremony in order to regain his status within his community. However, his condition has different causes and several implications for his life in the Pueblo. First of all, there is his engagement in white warfare which caused him to have PTSD. Second, as part of a Native American community, he strives to find balance

between western and native customs. Third, due to the fact that he had a white father and a Native American mother, he is not entirely accepted in his community. Finally, because of his aunt's treatment, he has an ambiguous position within his family. Therefore, Tayo's journey in order to complete his ceremony also triggers a process of identity formation, in which he gradually becomes aware of his place in his community and within his family, of the multi-faceted aspect of his condition and how to cope with it.

However, Tayo's process of identity formation can only be analyzed after the grounds for the term "identity" are understood. According to Chris Weedon's definition, "[i]dentity is perhaps best understood as a limited and temporary fixing for the individual of a particular mode of subjectivity as apparently what one *is*." He also points out that the role of identity is limiting the many possibilities of subjectivity, giving the individual a singular sense of being and belonging. He continues his argument saying that "[t]his process involves recruiting subjects to the specific meanings and values constituted within a particular discourse and encouraging identification." Such identification is mediated by social practices like "education, the media, sport and state rituals." He states later that "identity presupposes some degree of self-recognition on the part of the subject, often defined in relation to what one believes one is not" (19). Chantal Mouffe, on the other hand, treats these "many possibilities of subjectivity" as "an ensemble of 'subject positions' that can never be totally fixed in a closed system of differences." She defends, thus, that "the social agent"

is constructed by a diversity of discourses, among which there is no necessary relation but a constant movement of overdetermination and displacement. The "identity" of such a multiple and contradictory subject is therefore always contingent and precarious, temporarily fixed at the intersection of those subject positions and dependent on specific forms of identification. (33)

In this sense, both authors recognize the multiple character of the forms of identification called by many theorists as “pluralism.” Nonetheless, while Weedon sees identity as the choice for a particular form of identification or discourse at a given time, Mouffe defends the plurality of subject positions in a process of “constant subversion and overdetermination of one by the others” without their “coexistence” (33-34).

In *Ceremony*, these “subject positions” are somewhat blurred for Tayo before the completion of his ceremony. If we consider the household where he lives, for instance, he does not seem to have a defined place within the family structure. One of the reasons for this is that the clan is matrilineal, and women in the Pueblo have a “high status: besides being responsible for the household, they own the house, they make the important decisions, and especially the oldest in the group are looked to by all for advice. The men do the farming and are responsible for most of the ceremonial activities” (Seyersted 9-10). In Tayo’s home, old Grandma and Auntie are the ones who make the important decisions, though the final decision is always on Grandma’s hands. Even Robert, Auntie’s husband, does not seem to have a say in family matters until he is the only man in the house:

Tayo realized that as long as Josiah and Rocky had been alive, he had never known Robert except as a quiet man in the house that belonged to old Grandma and Auntie. (...) He had cultivated this deafness for as many years as he had been married to Auntie. His face was calm; he was patient with them because he had nothing to say. The sheep, the horses, and the fields – everything belonged to them, including the good family name. Now Robert had all things that Josiah had been responsible for. He looked tired. (31-32)

Tayo’s voice, on the other hand, is not heard in the family conversations until the end of the novel, after the ceremony is completed. All the times he speaks with someone in his house, it is a private conversation with either Grandma or Auntie, or a conversation with the other

men. Another reason for his feeling of estrangement is that, despite the love and care he receives from Josiah, Grandma and Rocky, Auntie continually treats him as both a “burden” and an intruder. She makes sure he knows that he is a nuisance and that his presence brings shame to the family (in her opinion).

Nevertheless, the recovery of the cattle, one of the predicaments to complete the ceremony, allows Tayo to be fully performing a distinct role in his family, which is taking care of the farm and the herds. Although he still has to abide to familial decisions and also Pueblo decisions of whether he is to be sent or not to the Veterans hospital again, for example, the fact that Auntie addresses him in family conversation, regardless of how trivial this conversation might seem, illustrates the sense of belonging created within his family. It happens only then, mainly, because Auntie is the one who forcefully prevents him from feeling the comfort that comes from familial bond.

Another point worth considering is his status as Native American. Gurminder K. Bhambra, in his essay about cultural identity, argues that identity, in this context, “correspond[s] to particular cultures and it is through the processes of defining and maintaining the boundaries of the groups to which individuals belong that cultural identities are constructed.” He also recalls the idea of an “I” in opposition to the “other”, as well as “we” is opposed to “them” when we think of a collective identity (33). Tayo, as a member of a Native American family inserted in a Native American reservation, shares the same customs and traditions as them. Yet, his identification with his community is troubled by his condition of miscegenation. Racism against him comes from both sides: Anglo Americans and Native Americans.

Stuart Hall in his essay “New Ethnicities” argues that racism “operates by constructing impassable symbolic boundaries between racially constituted categories, and its typically binary system of representation constantly marks and attempts to fix and naturalize

the difference between belongingness and otherness” (445). He also presents the term “ethnicity” as a historical, cultural and political construct, which defines the subject and his/her experience within his/her community. For him, “[t]he term ethnicity acknowledges the place of history, language and culture in the construction of subjectivity and identity, as well as the fact that all discourse is placed, positioned, situated, and all knowledge is contextual” (446). Thus, although Tayo grows up in the Native American historical, cultural and political background, he is constantly reminded of his hybridity. Throughout the novel it is not uncommon to find instances of the discriminatory treatment he receives from Emo or his aunt. At school, he was called “Mexican eyes;” the hazel-colored eyes are presented in the novel as a symbol for hybridity, and, because of this, a source of fear.

Even though Tayo openly acknowledges this “in-between” position, he fails to understand what it really means and the mixed feelings that come from his relationship with others. When he says: “I’m half-breed. I’ll be the first to say it. I’ll speak for both sides” (42), he does not really speak for both sides. Chances are, he speaks from neither side. These statements precede the conclusion of his “war story”, which breaks with the ritual of telling stories about women they have had and their performance at war. He cannot identify himself with the whites since he no longer belongs to the army of the United States; similarly to the other veterans, he cannot identify with life in the pueblo either. Ultimately, he is unable to place himself with the other veterans, who are already in this in-between position, since he fails to integrate their “war storytelling and drinking” ritual.

In contrast to Kwame Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates, Jr.’s idea that “ethnic and national identities operate in the lives of individuals by connecting them with some people, dividing them from others” (3), Tayo is unable to connect with any sphere. He does not have this sense of national identity because he loses his first-class citizenship by the end of the war. He does not have a sense of belonging within his pueblo either, both because he is

“half-breed” and because he is a war veteran, and consequently damaged by the white warfare evils. Appiah and Gates continue their argument saying that “[s]uch identities are often deeply integral to a person’s sense of self, defining an ‘I’ by placing it against a background ‘we.’” In this sense, it is possible to see why Tayo’s sense of self is shattered until he finishes the ceremony. It is only by the completion of the ceremony that he can understand his connection with the people surrounding him.

Hence, the question of his alienation from all the spheres where he circulates is dealt with as he rekindles his relationship with the land and nature. Firstly, we must take into consideration that one of the factors that aggravates Tayo’s trauma is the drought that persisted for six years while he was gone and almost a year after he had been back. Tayo blames himself for the draught because “he had prayed the rain away” (13). Thus, his journey is not only a means to cure his illness, but also an attempt to “cure” the land and bring the rain back. The narrator, at the beginning of the novel, pointedly shows the consequences of the long drought and the unchanged weather. However, the resilience of the land is often shown, and Tayo’s perception of this resilience makes him reconnect with nature little by little.

The canyon was the way he always remembered it; the beeweed plants made the air smell heavy and sweet like honey, and the bumblebees were buzzing around waxy yucca flowers. The leaves of the cottonwood trees that crowded the canyon caught reflections of the afternoon sun, hundreds of tiny mirrors flashing. He blinked his eyes and looked away to the shade below the cliffs where the rabbit brush was green and yellow daisies were blooming. The people said that even in the driest years nobody could ever remember a time when the spring had dried up. (44)

Moreover, as mentioned in chapter two, Tayo's journey is accompanied by his memories of his life before the war, making his ceremony both a time for learning and remembering old lessons. Before going to Gallup to see Betonie, Tayo remembers a time, previous to his departure to war, when he prayed for the rain and it did come. Both episodes, past and present, contribute to make Tayo feel better and willing to go back to work. However, as he had not gone through the ceremony with Betonie, he could not be considered "better."

It is during the ceremony with Betonie that he can see how this connection with nature is what makes him part of his people. When Betonie talks about the place where he lives, decayed, near the city dump, and full of destitute people, as being "comfortable," the narrator points out the peculiar meaning attributed to this word by the old man. "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). A similar argument is given when they talk about Mount Taylor, a sacred place for them, and the fact that that land belonged to white farmers. "They only fool themselves when they think it is theirs. The deeds and papers don't mean anything. It is the people who belong to the mountain" (127). Therefore, by reconnecting with the land, he is able to identify himself with his people, the people who belonged with the land.

However, it is only after his time alone at the ranch, and later with T'se, the mysterious woman who helps him retrieve his uncle's cattle, that he can finally be in communion with the land. T'se teaches him about plants and their use and helps him to become more conscious about the environment he inhabits. Besides, the sensation that came from loving and being loved increased his sense of belonging, and dissipated the traumatic memories.

Their days together had a gravity emanating from the mesas and arroyos, and it replaced the rhythm that had been interrupted so long ago; now the old

memories were less the constriction of a single throat muscle. (...) The breaking and crushing were gone, and the love pushed inside his chest, and when he cried now, it was because she loved him so much. (227)

His retreat at the canyon not only brings him back to T'se, but also helps him to make peace with Rocky's and Josiah's deaths. There he realizes that nothing that happened to them and to him could change the fact that he loved them and they loved him. As certain as the fact that the mountain could not be lost for the people, the love they shared could not be lost either: "The damage that had been done had never reached this feeling. This feeling was their life, vitality locked deep in blood memory, and the people were strong, and the fifth world endured, and nothing was ever lost as long as the love remained" (220). He could finally see then (or remember), that what made him a Laguna, was this love for the land, for his family, and for his people.

Even so, Silko's text does not propose a fixed cultural identity for Tayo. Instead, it shows the modes of identification with Native Americans without placing the Anglo Americans as the enemy. When Betonie tells Tayo that "you don't write off all the white people, just like you don't trust all the Indians," we can see that *Ceremony* neither fosters the anger against whites, nor overlooks the wrongs they caused to Native Americans. It focuses rather on the hybridity and the constant shift of subject positions.

Homi Bhabha, in his book *The Location of Culture*, discusses broadly the term hybridity in different contexts related to the several forms of colonization, where different cultures collide, but, instead of a dialectic relation in which a third term "resolves the tension between two cultures," the result is "a problematic of colonial representation and individuation that reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal" (113-114). In the introduction Bhabha explains that

[t]he representation of difference must not be hastily read as the reflection of *pre-given* ethnic or cultural traits set on the fixed tablet of tradition. The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, ongoing negotiation, that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities, that emerge in moments of historical transformation. (2)

These hybridities, which mean a “not here; not there”, place the subject in what he calls “Third Space” (term already presented in chapter one). “It is that Third Space, though unrepresentable itself, which constitute the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of cultures have no primordial unity or fixity.” In this sense, he continues, “even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized, and read anew” (37). This subversion, according to him, finds its place in culture:

Culture, as a colonial space of intervention and agonism, as the trace of the displacement of symbol to sign, can be transformed by the unpredictable and partial desire of hybridity. Deprived of their full presence, the knowledges of cultural authority may be articulated with forms of 'native' knowledges or faced with those discriminated subjects that they must rule but can no longer represent. (115)

This hybridity is represented, in *Ceremony*, by the protagonist, the speckled cattle, and by the characters of Night Swan, Betonie and his grandmother (the once Mexican girl). It is through his contact with them, either by memory or observation, or even by hearing their stories, that Tayo comes to terms with his hybrid condition.

Night Swan, Josiah’s mistress, a middle-aged Mexican woman, is remarkable for being exotic. This characteristic is, at the same time, a source of fear and desire. Night Swan, in the novel, is shown in the parallel narrative of Tayo’s coming of age, and plays an important role both in his development into adulthood (his first sexual experience was with

her), and in his path to recovery. She explains to him why people fear them and their peculiar hazel eyes:

“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.” She laughed softly. “They are fools. They blame us, the ones who look different. That way they don’t have to think about what has happened inside themselves.” (99)

This fear is illustrated again in the story Betonie tells about his grandmother. When she lets herself be captured, her kidnapers got scared of her by just looking at her hazel green eyes. When she is taken in by Descheeny, Betonie’s grandfather, she is ostracized by his other wives who make it clear that they didn’t want “that thing” around there (149). Even the story of her birth shows the fear and prejudice that only the color of her eyes caused on people. Because of her eye color, she was taken from the village in which she was born and thrown in the trash. The color of the eyes, thus, is a strong symbol for the hybridity in Silko’s novel, since it is an element that causes fear on people and make them avoid or overreact when dealing with the hybrid subjects.

Tayo, who at first sees his hybridity as one of the causes of his suffering, can finally recognize this as a positive condition when dealing with the speckled cattle. The Mexican cattle “were descendants of generations of desert cattle” (wild and stronger), and could survive the droughts and cold temperatures. They were very different from the Herefords, a breed of cattle grown by white farmers, which did not endure hard weather, nor ate anything other than grass. The presence of the spotted cattle, in this sense, is a reminder for Tayo that surviving depends upon the ability to adapt to harsh conditions.

Finally, it is only through Betonie's intervention and the ceremony he performs that Tayo is able to recover. As the world, as it used to be, and the social, cultural and political relations in it have been changing, the ceremonies have to evolve to. Silko's text, thus, shows that only hybrid subjects could make these changes effectively. Betonie observes the changes surrounding him, he travels and has contact with people from other places, keeps registers from western sources, such as calendars and phone books, and lives in a place where he can both look over the city and the Cerimonial grounds. He is able to see the changes and welcomes some of them. In addition, he avoids essentialisms and can see things from different perspectives.

In short, the plot, the stories in it, and the strongest characters in the novel, all show that, in a changing world, it is necessary to embrace this hybrid condition, to be open to difference. In the words of Jacques Rancière, "[t]he place of a political subject is an interval or a gap: being *together* to the extent that we are *in between* – between names, identities, cultures and so on" (68). When Tayo realizes that, he is able to complete his ceremony. There is only one more challenge: overcoming witchery.

1.3 – Preventing Witchery from Stopping the Story

As we have seen in chapter two, *Ceremony* has its prose narrative surrounded by embedded text in the form of poems, mythic texts that are related to the storyline, and which add meaning to Tayo's journey towards healing. The poem that opens the novel talks about the creation of the universe, this world and the four words below, and indicates Ceremony as a creation of Thought-Woman, the great creator. At the end, on the other hand, the reader encounters a poem about "witchery" and how it was defeated.

Whirling darkness
started its journey

with its witchery
 and
 its witchery
 has returned upon it.
 (...)

Whirling darkness
 has come back on itself.
 It keeps all its witchery
 to itself.
 (...)

It has stiffened
 with the effects of its own witchery.
 It is dead for now.
 (...) (262)

Although the poem above and the mentions of witchery evoke the recurrent motif of “good vs. evil” in the novel, I would argue that the term carries other different meanings attached to the explicit appearance of an antagonistic evil.

First of all, when we analyze the poem with the story of the creation of witchery, which appears right in the middle of the novel (pages 132 to 138) and which is told by Betonie in the second night of Tayo’s ceremony, we can see that its creation is related to cultural differences and to the power of stories. Betonie talks about a time when there were nothing European, western culture did not exist. It comes into existence because of a contest among witches of different cultures. Not only are Native American peoples mentioned, but also Asian and African peoples come to the witches’ convention: “[s]ome came from far far away across oceans across mountains. Some had slanty eyes others had black skin” (132).

This story, thus, recalls the idea of the colonization, in which Asian, African and Native American cultures already existed when Europeans came. However, Betonie's story is subversive in the sense that Europeans existence is a result of "Indian witchery."

Moreover, although Europeans and all the evil that they have brought with them (witchery) were not invented by any of these cultures, they only suffer the consequence of their dispute of who was more powerful. An anonymous agent, "no one ever knew where this witch came from which tribe or if it was a woman or a man" (134), is the one to unleash "the evil" by just telling a story. Hence, similarly to Thought woman, by simply telling the story things are set into motion. Due to this, when the witch is asked to call the story back in the end, it was not possible anymore.

The anonymous witch's story, thus, bring to fore many different questions related to colonization and western domination: the disregard for nature in the unquenchable thirst for profit, the fear of the difference and the destruction or subjugation of other cultures, the weapons and diseases they bring with them, and the claim of a land that is not theirs. Also, by simply placing witches from different cultures, Betonie's story, and the anonymous witch embedded story as well, discusses European colonization and domination as a whole. It recognizes that the condition of colonial, and after postcolonial, subject is common to these different cultures.

Another point worth considering is that, once more in Silko's novel, the performance of the story has the power of creation. Stories are what put things into motion and when they are told, things happen. Another example of this can be noticed when T'se tells Tayo her prophecy of the completion of his ceremony. T'se is able to tell Tayo details of what is about to happen such as the coming of the Army doctors, the betrayal of his friends, the confusion of the elders about him, the deceit of almost all the involved in Tayo's search by Emo, and the way of Tayo escaping this. Although T'se's prophecy foreshadows the end of the novel,

Tayo is not able to remember in time everything in her warning. He runs away and T'se's story of him being chased starts to unravel. In order to get to the end of this story unharmed, Tayo must win over the witchery spread by the "destroyers" and their agents, in the novel represented by Emo and Tayo's own friends Leroy and Harley. The completion of Tayo's ceremony depends on it.

To this end, the protagonist of *Ceremony* must understand how witchery works. Tayo gets acquainted with the term through Betonie and further T'se. The appearance of the story of witchery in the middle of the novel divides Tayo's journey in two parts, before Betonie's ceremony when he is troubled, ill and unaware of the forces at play in his life, and after Betonie's intervention, which begins the ceremony that will enable Tayo to heal and establish his place at home and within his community. Only after raising Tayo's awareness of witchery, can Betonie perform the ritual with the chants and the cut on Tayo's scalp.

Witchery, therefore, according to the explanations given in the novel, are the evil forces controlled by the destroyers, which scare people and make them fear difference, separating cultures, making them hate one another, and ultimately cause their own destruction or destroy the different. In addition, the narrator and characters in ceremony are careful not to identify whites directly with witchery or the destroyers: they are called simply "tools" of this evil power. Also, as Betonie points out, "[s]ome people act like witchery is responsible for everything that happens, when actually witchery only manipulates a small portion" (130). This means that not everything is caused by external forces, some things might be accidental and other consequences of our own actions.

Furthermore, considering the interpretation of the term witchery in chapter one I as the dominant ideological discourses at play, we can see how this idea develops towards the end of the novel. The site of the Jackpile mine as the place where the ceremony is completed is very meaningful. Tayo's illness is caused by his participation in WWII, where he fought

the Japanese army, who was ultimately defeated after the dropping of the two nuclear bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. New Mexico, as mentioned in the novel, was a site for nuclear weapons' trials and the uranium they used came from the mines in Laguna Pueblo, for instance the Jackpile mine. When Tayo hides at the mine, he realizes that the connections between the two cultures were more intricate.

He walked to the mine shaft slowly, and the feeling became overwhelming: the pattern of the ceremony was completed there. He knelt and found an ore rock. (...) [T]hey had taken these beautiful rocks from deep within earth and they had laid them in a monstrous design, realizing destruction on a scale only they could have dreamed. (246)

In this sense, Lagunas were fighting the Japanese for a cause they did not comprehend, and at the same time working in the mines to retrieve the mineral that would cause mass destruction in Japan, as well as harming their own lives due to radiation poisoning and war casualties. Witchery, thus, or the dominant discourses encouraged Native Americans to fight in the war as a means of integrating the American society, and also instilled in them the idea of exploiting the land in order to obtain profit without thinking about the consequences.

On the other hand, the counter-discourses also seem to be associated to witchery. These counter-discourses endorse the hatred against the "Other", being a source of conflict, resulting in racism, intolerance and retaliation. They also promote discrimination against all that is related to other cultures, and against hybridity. Hence, a "Third Space", as advocated by Bhabha, must be adopted in order to win over witchery. Only by changing the place of enunciation, can the dominant discourse be subverted.

Finally, Tayo's ceremony is completed only when he refuses to engage in the path of destruction followed by other veterans. Instead of attacking Emo to stop him from torturing Harley, he stays hid in the mine and does not take any action. "He would have been another

victim, a drunk Indian war veteran settling an old feud; (...) The white people would shake their heads, more proud than sad that it took a white man to survive in their world and that these Indians couldn't seem to make it" (253). In this way, the subversion of the dominant discourse is obtained by silence and stillness. By not doing anything, Tayo avoids the old pattern that made other Native Americans fall prey to alcohol, violence and death.

3.4 – “No Boundaries, Only Transitions”

Stories, as well as rituals, are an important part of most cultures. They differ, of course, from culture to culture, in the way they integrate each of these cultures but their presence is undeniable. In addition, the use of stories to cure mental suffering has been studied for a long time and many theories came up since Joseph Breuer, Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan started their studies and psychoanalysis was developed. Even before that if we consider the act of confession in the Catholic Church, which many people used as a way of relieving emotional burdens by sharing their sins with a priest.

In *Ceremony*, the ceremony Tayo goes through is a mix of ritual and psychotherapy, in which he has the chance to deal with his traumatic memories, and build (or rebuild) his sense of self. As he goes on his journey to complete the ceremony, searching for the star pattern he is supposed to locate in order to recover his uncle's cattle, he is able to cope with his traumas, he gradually learns more about and also remembers his connection with the land and nature. This connection helps him in the process of identification with his people and with his family. The recovery of the cattle is also important in this process of identification, since it helps Tayo establish his place within his family. Also, due to the fact that they are hybrid animals, Tayo can see how hybridity is a positive characteristic. In addition, it is when he is searching for cattle that he meets T'se, another important agent in his healing process,

since she helps him recover the cattle and also tells him her prophecy of the completion of his ceremony. It is through his relationship with her that Tayo finds love and feel whole again.

Above all, *Ceremony* engages in the subversion of the dominant discourses, represented by whites in the novel, using two different tools: first, the symbolic appearance of hybrids and hybrid elements, for instance the hazel-colored eyes, suggesting this condition of liminality as desired; second, Tayo's battle against witchery, which is characterized by the fostering of anger and destruction between cultures, or between a group and a different "Other". Hence, Silko's text inspires the acceptance of change, the adaptation to adverse situation, the openness to others, without losing track of the connection with the land, the people, and the traditions.

Conclusion

Ceremony and the Story that is Still Being Told

Old Grandma shook her head slowly, and closed her cloudy eyes again. "I guess I must be getting old," she said, "because these goings'on around Laguna don't get me excited any more". She sighed, and laid her head back on the chair. "It seems I already heard these stories before... only thing is, the names sound different."

Leslie Marmon Silko

Ceremony is a journey not only for Tayo, but also for the reader. In the novel, Tayo has the chance to deal with the traumatic memories from war, as well as the ones from his childhood. He also has the opportunity to learn more about the culture of his people, and to remember the lessons he learned before the war. The cure for Tayo is not only the relief from PTSD symptoms, but the establishment of his place at home and within his community. In addition, the reconnection with the land and the discovery of love, present and past, are paramount for Tayo coming to terms with his hybrid identity. Hybridity, a recurrent motif in Silko's novel, is related to the condition of many Native Americans, who are "in-between cultures", even if they are not from mixed ancestries. In the novel, the hybrid is presented as a desirable characteristic and a solution against racism, intolerance, hatred. However, Tayo's journey, as well as the completion of his ceremony, is only possible because of the stories. All the stories: the war stories, the Laguna and Navajo stories, the stories told by Josiah, Grandma, Betonie and Night Swan, and finally T'se's prophecy.

As discussed in Chapter 1, the Native American war veterans performed their war stories as a way of coping with their cultural trauma. This collective trauma, which is a result of the long process of subjugation, oppression and disfranchisement caused by the European colonizers and later for the Anglo Americans, is very explicit in Silko's novel. Yet cultural trauma, or the collective construction formed by "individual experiences of pain" (Alexander 1), only happens through the creation of narratives. These narratives, which are delivered by social agents skilled in meaning making (the carrier groups), are performed in the novel by

Emo and also the narrator. In this way, *Ceremony* is a social narrative as well. Nevertheless, it does not promote a separation between cultures. It advocates that, despite the suffering and pain caused by whites, not all of them are the same, and not everything that comes from western culture is evil.

The discussion in Chapter 2 focuses on the forms and function of the stories in the novel. The structure of the novel, formed by fragments in prose narrative and embedded texts in poetry form arise many questions about *Ceremony*'s plot. The embedded texts, most of them mythic texts from Keresan and Navajo oral tradition, recall the importance of preserving Native American cultural heritage. It is only possible through the performances of the old-time stories. In Silko's novel, some of these stories are analogous to the events in Tayo's journey. The novel, thus, is structured with some of the embedded texts bracketing the prose fragments, as though what Tayo is going through has happened before. The prose narrative, on the other hand, can be regarded as two parallel narratives: Tayo's journey in order to complete his ceremony and Tayo's coming of age. In my discussion of the novel's structure I also examine the claim that *Ceremony* is a postmodernist text. Although there are some similarities between the novel and postmodernist works, the differences point out to a different kind of work, which could be defined only by a critical theory capable of encompassing the peculiar Native American rhetoric and Western criticism.

Finally, in the discussion that shapes Chapter 3, I try to show the importance of stories in Tayo's healing process and for the completion of his ceremony. Another important question dealt with in this chapter is the process of identity formation that is triggered during his journey. Tayo can cope with the war traumatic memories only when he talks to Betonie about them. Betonie's stories also help him understand better his condition as a hybrid and how he can recover from his illness. Also, the completion of Tayo's ceremony depends on the recovery of his uncle's cattle and the defeat of witchery. When Tayo goes after the cattle,

he meets T'se, who both helps him retrieve the cattle and fight his enemies, by telling him what is going to happen in his future. T'se also teaches him about herbs and plants and helps him rekindle his relationship with nature. It is because of T'se's love that Tayo can finally overcome the traumatic memories.

The defeat of witchery is Tayo's ceremony final part. However, throughout the novel, it is mentioned that it has been going on for a long time. Witchery, meaning in the novel the evil forces that unbalance this world, makes people fear change, ostracize who is different, and engage in a path of hatred and destruction. I compare witchery, in my discussion, to the dominant discourses and also the counter-discourses that tend to promote racism, anger and retaliation. In the novel, the hybridity is suggested as a way of defeating witchery, i.e., we will be able to subvert these discourses only when we find what Bhabha calls "Third Space", or this place in-between cultures.

Tayo's story seems to be still being told. His ceremony is completed, but the story continues. We deal with these multiple subject positions every day, and there is still a lot of opposition to difference. Tayo was able to come to terms with his hybrid identity, become aware of these cultural differences, and subvert the dominant discourses and the expectations they bring. When he refuses to confront Emo, he escapes the path of destruction expected for the young Native Americans, mainly the war veterans. Stories are paramount in *Ceremony*, as they are in every culture, regardless the technologies available nowadays. Thus, understanding them is the best way to understand ourselves.

Works Cited

- Alexander, Jeffrey C. *Trauma: A Social Theory*. Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2012. Print.
- Alexander, Jeffrey C., Bernhard Giesen, and Jason L. Mast. "Cultural Pragmatics: Social Performance between Ritual and Strategy." *Social Performance: Symbolic Action, Cultural Pragmatics, and Ritual*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2006. 29-90. Print.
- Appiah, Anthony, and Henry Louis Gates. "Editors' Introduction: Multiplying Identities." *Identities*. Chicago: U of Chicago, 1995. 1-6. Print.
- Bhabha, Homi K. "Culture's In-between" *Questions of Cultural Identity*. ed. Stuart Hall & Paul Du Gay. London/Thousand Oaks/New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1996. p.53-60. Print.
- . *The Location of Culture*. London/New York: Routledge, 1994. Print.
- Bhabra, Gurinder K. "Culture, Identity and Rights: Challenging Contemporary Discourses of Belonging." *The Situated Politics of Belonging*. Ed. Nira Yuval-Davis, Kalpana Kannabirān, and Ulrike Vieten. London: SAGE, 2006. 32-41. Print.
- Bruner, Jerome. *Making Stories: Law, Literature, Life*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2002. Print.
- Chatman, Seymour Benjamin. *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1978. Print.
- Coleman, Penny. *Flashback: Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, Suicide and the Lessons of War*. Boston: Beacon, 2006. Print.
- Connor, Steven. *Postmodernist Culture: An Introduction to Theories of the Contemporary*. New York: Blackwell, 1989. Print.
- Cutchins, Dennis. "'So That the Nations May Become Genuine Indian': Nativism and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*." *Journal of American Culture*. 22.4 (1999): 77-89. Print.

- Dean, John Emory. "Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*: Talking Back to Discursive Destruction." *Travel Narratives from New Mexico: Reconstructing Identity and Truth*. Amherst, NY: Cambria, 2009. 145-73. Print.
- Derosa, Aaron. "Cultural Trauma, Evolution, and America's Atomic Legacy in Silko's *Ceremony*." *JLT*. 6.1 (2012): 41-64. Print.
- Eagleton, Terry. *Ideology: An Introduction*. London: Verso, 1991. Print.
- Geraerts, Elke. "Posttraumatic Memory." Ed. Gerald M. Rosen and B. Christopher. Frueh. *Clinician's Guide to Posttraumatic Stress Disorder*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2010. 77-95. Print
- Grossberg, Lawrence. "Identity and Cultural Studies: Is That All There Is?" *Questions of Cultural Identity*. ed. Stuart Hall & Paul Du Gay. London/Thousand Oaks/New Dehli: Sage, 1996. p.87-106. Print.
- Hall, Stuart. "New Ethnicities." *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*. Ed. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen. London: Routledge, 1996. 442-49. Print.
- Hartner, Marcus. "Multiperspectivity." *The Living Handbook of Narratology*. Interdisciplinary Center for Narratology, University of Hamburg, 15 Oct. 2012. Web. 02 Mar. 2015.
- Hembree, Elizabeth A., and Edna B. Foa. "Cognitive Behavioral Treatments for PTSD." Ed. Gerald M. Rosen and B. Christopher. Frueh. *Clinician's Guide to Posttraumatic Stress Disorder*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2010. 177-203. Print.
- Holm, Sharon. "The 'Lie' of the Land: Native Sovereignty, Indian Literary Nationalism, and Early Indigenism in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*." *American Indian Quarterly*. 32.3 (2008): 243-274. Print.

- Jahner, Elaine. "An Act of Attention: Event Structure in *Ceremony*." Ed. Allan Richard Chavkin. *Leslie Marmon Silko's Ceremony: A Casebook*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002. 41-50. Print.
- Kovic, Ron. *Born on the Fourth of July*. New York: Akashic books, 1995. Print.
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *Myth and Meaning*. London/New York: Routledge, 2001. Print.
- "Laguna Pueblo." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 17 Mar. 2015. Web. 30 Mar. 2015.
- McLoughlin, Kate. "Introduction to Volume I." Introduction. Ed. Thomas Riggs. *The Literature of War*. Detroit: St. James, 2012. xi-xiv. Print.
- Mitchell, Carol. "Ceremony as Ritual". *American Indian Quarterly*. spec. *Symposium Issue on Leslie Marmon Silko's Ceremony* 5.1 (1979) : 27-35. Print.
- Mouffe, Chantal. "Democratic Politics and the Question of Identity." Ed. John Rajchman. *The Identity in Question*. New York: Routledge, 1995. 33-45.
- Nabokov, Peter. *Native American Testimony*. New York: Penguin, 1999.
- Nelson, Robert M. *Leslie Marmon Silko's Ceremony: The Recovery of Tradition*. New York: Peter Lang, 2008. Print.
- O'Brien, Tim. *If I Die in a Combat Zone – Box me up and Ship me Home*. New York: Broadway Books, 1999. Print.
- Ong, Walter J. *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the World*. London/New York: Routledge, 2002. Print.
- "Orion (constellation)." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 19 Feb. 2015. Web. 20 Apr. 2015.
- "Orion (mythology)." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 28 Mar. 2015. Web. 20 Apr. 2015.
- "Primary Documents in American History." *Indian Removal Act: (Virtual Programs & Services, Library of Congress)*. Library of Congress, 24 Sept. 2014. Web. 15 Oct. 2014.

- Pulitano, Elvira. *Toward a Native American Critical Theory*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska, 2003.
- Rancière, Jacques. "Politics, Identification, and Subjectivization." Ed. John Rajchman. *The Identity in Question*. New York: Routledge, 1995. 63-70. Print.
- Silko, Leslie Marmon. *Ceremony*. New York: Penguin Books, 2006. Kindle file.
- Satterlee, Michelle. "Landscape Imagery and Memory in the Narrative of Trauma: A Closer Look at Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*" *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 13.2 (2006) : 73-92. Print.
- "Story 1." *Story*. Oxford Dictionaries, n.d. Web. 06 May 2015.
- Seyersted, Per. "Leslie Marmon Silko". Boise State University Western Writers Series, Number 45. Idaho: J&D Printing, 1980. Print.
- Schauer, Margarete, Frank Neuner, and Thomas Elbert. "Voices of Victims." Introduction. *Narrative Exposure Therapy (NET) Training Manual: A Short-term Intervention for Traumatic Stress Disorders in Children and Adolescents*. 2nd ed. Gottingen: Hogrefe & Huber, 2011. 1-6. Print.
- Taylor, Diana. *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. Durham: Duke UP, 2003. Print.
- Turner, Victor. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure*. Ithaca/New York: Cornell UP, 1991. Print.
- Weedon, Chris. *Identity and Culture*. Maidenhead, England: Open UP, 2004. Print.
- Woodward, Joe. "The Literature of War." *Poets & Writers*. N.p., 01 Nov. 2005. Web. 03 Nov. 2014. <http://www.pw.org/content/literature_war>.
- Whitbeck, Les B. et al. "Conceptualizing and Measuring Historical Trauma Among American Indian People". *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 33.3/4 (2004) : 119-130. Print.

Zinn, Howard. *A People's History of the United States*. New York: HarperCollins, 2009.
Epub.

Additional Bibliographical References

Beidler, Peter. "Bloody Mud, Rifle Butts, and Barbed Wire: Transforming the Bataan Death March in Silko's *Ceremony*" *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 28.1 (2004) 23–33. Print.

---. "Animals and theme in *Ceremony*". *American Indian Quarterly*. 5.1 (1979) : 13-18.

Coltelli, Laura. *Winged Words: American Indian Writers Speak*. Nebraska: U of Nebraska P, 1990. Print.

Concannon, Kevin. "Deer-Hoof Clackers and Coke Bottles: The Construction of the Postcolonial Nation in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*." *Ariel*. 35.3-4. (2004) : 183-200. Print.

Derrida, Jacques. *Writing and Difference*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1978. Print.

Dyke, Annette Van. "'What Do You Do When You Love Everyone on Every Side of the War?': Teaching the Complexities of American Indian Literature." *MELUS*. 16.2 (1989-1990) : 63-68. Print.

Evasdaughter, Elizabeth N. "Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*: Healing Ethnic Hatred by Mixed-Breed Laughter". *MELUS*. 15.1 (1988) : 83-85.

Jahner, Elaine A. "Metalanguages" In: *Narrative Chance: Postmodern Discourse on Native American Indian Literatures*. Ed. Gerald Robert Vizenor. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 1989, pp.155-185. Print.

- Kazi-Nance, Ambata K. "Traumatic and Healing Memory in Leslie Marmon Silko's Ceremony and Toni Morrison's Song of Solomon". University of New Orleans Theses and Dissertations, May 2012. Web. 25 Aug. 2012.
- Kienzler, Hanna. "Debating War-trauma and Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in an Interdisciplinary Arena". *Soc. Sci. Med.* 67 (2008): 218–227. Print.
- Liotard, Jean François. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge 'Theory and History of Literature, v.10.'* Trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: UMP, 1984. Print.
- Morse, Janice M. et al. "Cree Indian Healing Practices and Western Health Care: A Comparative Analysis". *Soc. Sci. Med.* 32.12, (1991) 1361-1366. Print.
- Orr, Delilah. "Bear, Mountain Lion, Deer, and Yellow Woman in Leslie Marmon Silko's Ceremony." *FEMSPEC.* 2:2 (2001) : 73-86. Print.
- Roberts, Jill. "Between Two 'Darknesses': The Adoptive Condition in 'Ceremony' and 'Jasmine'". *Modern Language Studies*, 25. 3 (1995) : 77-97. Print.
- Sarairah, Dafer Yousif . "Leslie Marmon Silko's Ceremony as a Viable Path of Resistance and Agency". Web. 25 Aug. 2012.
- Schank, Roger C. & Abelson, Robert P. "Knowledge and Memory: The Real Story". In: Robert S. Wyer, Jr (ed) *Knowledge and Memory: The Real Story*. Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1995. 1-85. Print.
- Shedlock, Marie L. *Story-Teller*. New York: D. Appleton & Company; 1917. Web. 27 Sep 2012.
- Shumaker, Conrad. "Out of the Classroom and into the Canyons: An American Indian Travel Course in Theory and Practice." *Studies in American Indian Literatures.* 19.1 (2007) : 32-48. Print.

Tsosie, Rebecca. "Changing Women: The Cross-Currents of American Indian Feminine Identity." *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*. 12.1 (1988) : 1-37. Print.