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Male Laguna Cultural Infulence in the Restoration of Tayo

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MALE LAGUNA CULTURAL INFULENCE IN THE RESTORATION OF TAYO

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We hereby approve this

For

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For the department of

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my family, who has been so supportive throughout this long process. Six years is quite a journey and a lot of sacrifice. To my late father Peter R.L. Parry, I wish you could be here. Cancer took you far too soon to see the end result of a long journey. To my mother for the emotional support, I would not have succeeded in finishing.

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Peter L Parry

ABSTRACT

Scholars have understood Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* as a journey to restoration for her protagonist Tayo. The scholarly discussion focuses predominately on the female side of Silko's novel. Yet Silko balances between the male and female side of Laguna Culture which has not been acknowledged enough by scholars. Silko uses three male characters, Robert, Ku'oosh, and Betonie to guide Tayo back to Laguna Culture, which is feminine. I intend to show importance of Silko's male characters. Silko also intended to use her male characters to present a line that ranges from the family (Robert) to the community (Ku'oosh) to the larger world (Betonie) while showing the restoration of Tayo at each point. Without the men there is no return to Laguna Culture for Tayo. All three men act as partners and active participants in Tayo's restoration process. The end result is that Tayo rejoins Laguna Society and is flexible, while meeting the needs of the people.

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Chapter I

Introduction: Understanding Tayo's World and How it Works

Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* has usually been observed by critics as being a search for identity and rejoining of community by the protagonist, Tayo, a biracial Laguna man, who has encountered trauma as the result of war as well as his childhood. Most of the criticism that surrounds Silko's novel is a combination of cultural and gender criticism. Cultural and gender criticism is often intertwined and focus on the female side of the Laguna Culture. Louise Barnett's article "Yellow Women and Leslie Marmon Silko's Feminism" is a combination of culture and gender criticism that also includes some of Silko's thoughts on Yellow Woman. Barnett's article is fairly typical of cultural and gender intertwining with little emphasis on the male characters. A few critics (see Paula Gunn Allen, Judith Antell, and Delilah Orr) exclusively focus on the female side of Silko novel. Night Swan and Ts'eh are heavily focused on by most critics. Both women have been analyzed through a cultural lens as well as gender. Silko uses both women to help restore Tayo and reveal Laguna culture, which has been noted by critics. Additionally both women are vigorously discussed within the discussions surrounding Silko's *Ceremony*. The women's role in the critical discussion is also far larger than that of the men.

This large role in the critical discussion by the women is understandable as the Laguna are a matrilineal society and their cosmology is influenced by female deities, which strongly influences Silko. Textually even before the reader meets the protagonist, Tayo, a female narrator is introduced at the start of the poem, which runs the length of the novel. According to the poem, “Ts’its’tsi’nako, Thought-Woman is sitting in her room and whatever she thinks about appears” (Silko 1). Thought-Woman is the supreme goddess of the Laguna people and she created everything. The poem states, “She thought of her sisters and they created the universe this world and the four worlds below. Thought-Woman, the spider, named things and as she named them they appeared” (Silko1). The women have a tremendous influence upon Laguna society and Laguna belief is that Thought Woman created the world. Understandably the women receive a large amount of attention.

Yet the male characters that Silko uses to help her protagonist are barely noticed in the critical discussion and carry a support role to prove points that are being made. Rarely with the expectation of Betonie are the men looked at as partners in restoring Tayo and helping him to rejoin the Laguna Community after a difficult journey. Robert and Ku’oosh are often viewed as not really having much of a direct role in helping Tayo. Robert, an uncle who is a stand-in for Josiah is for the most part is viewed as having a limited supporting role. Ku’oosh, a Laguna medicine man is far too often dismissed and is not deeply examined. As a result few cultural and feminist critics focus on the male characters and masculine side of Laguna Culture within Silko’s novel. For the most part the male characters have been subordinate to the female characters and used to prove points about the female side of the Laguna Culture. With the exception of Betonie, a

Navajo medicine man who is outside of the Laguna Community, the men are not viewed critically as individuals that Silko used nor are they not really looked at as active partners in Tayo's restoration. At times the men have almost been looked at as if they are bystanders, who simply move the text along. Silko would not have put so many male role models simply to move her novel along. The lack of balance between the male and female sides is surprising to say the least. Silko showed both sides of Laguna gender and yet both cultural along with feminist critics gravitate towards the feminine side of Laguna Culture, while seemingly ignoring the male contributions that Silko put into her novel. There is some criticism and review of Silko's male characters with the overwhelming majority of the criticism has gone to Betonie and his involvement in restoring Tayo.

A few critics have discussed the male side as it reflects the femmie culture. Edith Swan's "Laguna Prototypes Of Manhood In Ceremony" shows more than most critics how the male Laguna culture influenced Silko's novel. Swan also shows to a degree how strong Josiah's influence was on Tayo. Swan's article also displays a combination of subordination and partnership between the male and female aspects of Laguna Culture. Only a few critics such as Tom Lynch in his article "What Josiah Said: Uncle Josiah's Role in Ceremony" deals with the masculine side of Laguna Culture as well as a male character other than the protagonist Tayo. Troy J. Basset's "My Brother: The Recovery of Rocky in Leslie Marmon Silko's Ceremony" deals with the relationship between Rocky and Tayo is the only other critical article dealing with some of the male characters. The lack of discussion is surprising considering that without Silko's Robert, Ku'oosh, and Betonie, Tayo could not have returned to Mother Earth. Textually Robert, Ku'oosh and Betonie all serve important roles in Silko's novel. There needs to be more of a

balanced critical view of the men in Silko's *Ceremony*. I seek to expand this discussion on male influence by showing that Robert, Ku'oosh, and Betonie are worth considering in the critical discussion and make important contributions. Moreover the men need to be viewed as partners in the process of restoring Tayo rather than being merely subordinate to the restoration process.

Silko has her male characters hold a great deal of responsibility within her text. Each man is also a representative of the various parts of Laguna Society. Robert would have to stand in for Josiah, the uncle who raised Tayo. Robert has received little attention in his role in helping to restore Tayo. Ku'oosh, a Laguna medicine man is asked to help Tayo by the family. Ku'oosh is usually ignored by the critics, but represents the Laguna community. Yet it is Ku'oosh, who starts the restoration of Tayo more formally before passing the final part of restoration off to Betonie. Betonie, a Navajo medicine man is critically recognized as the one who completes the restoration of Tayo and the one who reintroduces Tayo to Laguna society. While Betonie receives the majority of the critical attention in regards to his abilities in healing Tayo, Betonie has not really been looked at from the perspective of extending what Ku'oosh tried to begin when he talked with Tayo. For the most part Silko's men have been separated and are mostly disconnected from each other. Surprisingly Robert, Ku'oosh, and Betonie act as a linear reference point that has been missed.

Silko's intentions were to move Tayo from the most basic unit of Laguna society, the family (Robert) to the community (Ku'oosh) and finally to the larger world (Betonie) in order to show restoration as well as Laguna ideal that are seen through the men. Both the cultural and feminist discussions have acknowledged the journey to restoration, but

not the interconnected and linear help that Silko provided through the men. As thoroughly fragmented as Silko's *Ceremony* is in regards to its construction, the men are steady and act as a line to follow. The line starts with Tayo's uncle Robert, who is a representative of Tayo's family and imparts as well as reinforces the basic Laguna principals. Silko continues the line with Ku'oosh giving more advanced Laguna principals and preparing Tayo to meet Betonie. Betonie is the last part of the line and Silko has Betonie explain what Ku'oosh started. Without the men there is no journey back to Mother Earth. Critically the men need to be viewed as being interconnected rather than separated from each other. Silko puts each of her male characters in important places, where each man helps Tayo reach restoration. The other important male figure, Josiah has been viewed as important in the legacy he left Tayo and is considered a strong, caring man.

Yet Silko surrounds Tayo with other strong men, who reveal a distinct, strong and surprising masculine culture as he journeys towards regaining both his identity within the Laguna Community and to rejoin the Laguna Community. Critically this must be acknowledged as well. Silko intended for Robert, Ku'oosh, and Betonie not only to be role models, but also reveal the masculine side of Laguna Culture. Each character was used by Silko to chart Tayo's progress and to reveal aspects about the Laguna Community. While the discussion by the cultural and feminist critics has been rather limited, I seek to expand and build upon the notion that there are male Laguna figures that reveal a strong, individualistic side that is balanced towards being responsible to the community. Silko put Robert, Ku'oosh, and Betonie into her novel to help Tayo reclaim both his individual identity and well as his place within the community.

Chapter II

Laguna Men: The Influential Cultural World Surrounding Tayo

Silko was not going to go easy on Tayo and did not give him an easy war assignment. When we first encounter Tayo, we see a traumatized war veteran, who is lost and is in need of help. According to Silko, “Tayo tossed in the old iron bed, the coiled springs kept squeaking even after he lay still again, calling up humid dreams of black night and loud voices rolling him over and over again like debris caught in a flood”(5). Memories of war would haunt Tayo as would his difficult childhood. Tayo was never accepted by his family and the rejection took its toll as Tayo was fighting in the Pacific. Silko put Tayo into some of the worst fighting of WWII. In an execution scene where Tayo’s unit was supposed to kill some Japanese prisoners, Tayo had a strong reaction to the execution. According to text; “Tayo stood there, stiff with nausea, while they fired at the soldiers, and watched his uncle fall” (7). Josiah was Tayo’s beloved uncle, who died while Tayo was away. Josiah treated Tayo like a son and was kind to him. The rest of the family was for most part not sure as to how to deal with Tayo. Tayo’s aunt was different from the rest of the family. Silko shows Tayo’s relationship with his aunt as being hostile. According to the text “it was a private understanding between the two of them. When Josiah or old Grandma or Robert was there, the agreement was suspended, and she

pretended to treat him the same as she treated Rocky, but they both knew it was only temporary”(Silko 61). Silko has given Tayo’s aunt a vindictive streak that enjoys psychological and emotional abuse. The text also states that Tayo’s aunt “wanted him close enough to feel excluded, to be aware of the distance between them” (Silko 61-62). Tayo was biracial and did not know his parents. For Tayo the loss of Josiah was traumatic and World War II acted as a spark, which brought the entire trauma together. Josiah was an important part of Tayo’s life.

In Laguna Culture, the uncle is very important. According to Edith Swan; “for a young Laguna boy, the most important adult male model within his social domain is his mother’s brother (Uncle Josiah)” (Swan 40). For Tayo the loss of Josiah is heavy and very understandable. Swan also remarked that the “mother’s brother is fixed, stable and reliable” (40). The uncle is not only stable, but heavily influences a male child as well. According to Thomas Lynch, the “uncle plays a profound and unique role in the lives of his sister’s children” (140). Not only does the uncle provide stability, but is a guide to influence the behavior as well as instill the values of the Laguna. Tayo had lost the most stable and influential man in his life, but another uncle, Robert would step in to give Tayo the stability as well as the reliability that he needed.

Silko did not give Robert the role of raising Tayo, but does make Robert the stabilizer. Robert was considerably different than Josiah. According to Silko; “Tayo realized then 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” (29). Although Tayo was surprised, he would have a short conversation with Robert that would start the process of regaining identity within the community. The conversation is short,

but very important. Tayo declared that “when I get better, I can help you” (Silko 29). Tayo sees Robert as a person of stability during a very difficult time. Robert’s response was positive. He remarked “that would be nice, but don’t hurry. You take it easy. Get well” (Silko 29). Robert’s world had changed as well with the death of Josiah. According to Silko; “Robert had all the things that Josiah had been responsible for” (29). In other words Robert was responsible maintaining everything that belonged to the family. Slowly Robert would become a steady rock to lean on and his acceptance of Tayo would slowly start the reintegration back into Laguna Society.

Silko uses Robert as not only a model for Tayo, but also to explain Robert’s role within the family as being important. Silko based Robert’s actions on Laguna cultural norms. According to Swan, “like real Laguna youth, Tayo learns the social and ceremonial nature of gender within matrilineal society through his mentors of both sexes” (55). Both genders play a role in and balance Laguna Society. Swan also declares that “social identity is mediated through women and access to religious knowledge passes through men” (55). Identity and religious knowledge are often intertwined especially in smaller societies such as the Laguna. Without religious knowledge in a small society, identity can be fractured. The religious knowledge in the case of the Laguna revolves around female deities and religion does reinforce identity. There is also a unique balance between the men and women. Swan says that “men move into and out of the corporate web of relationships keyed to their mothers, sisters and wives” (43). In other words the men are fluid and go from place to place as needed. The women are more stable than the men. Swan declares that the “women represent constancy –they ground the system, own property, and confer identity in the clan name” (43). The women’s stability combined

with men's mobility allow for the Laguna Society to flourish. Without the men teaching the religious aspect of Laguna Culture and caring for the children, the Laguna Society cannot possibly survive. At the most basic level of Laguna Society, the men are teaching the children the starting points of the Laguna Culture. This is the opposite of American Society where the women are the ones teaching and nurturing the children. Additionally it is the men who confer the identity and name in American Society. No matter how the family unit is socially constructed, a great deal of learning takes place within the most basic unity of any society.

In Tayo's case, Josiah was the one who raised him. Even though Robert did not have to rear Tayo there was still the maintenance of the family property as well as the animals. Robert was older as well. The text states that Robert "looked tired" (Silko 29). We see just how busy Robert has become. Robert told Tayo that he helped his "brother-in-law with our fields" (Silko 29). The word "fields" suggest multiple instead of just one singular field which can take a considerable amount of time to work. Robert then acknowledges that some changes have happened. He remarks that "they don't expect me do very much now" because "they know I'm pretty busy here" (Silko 29). Silko is still having Robert model the Laguna ideals to Tayo and keeping the legacy of Josiah alive. Josiah left a legacy that needed to be maintained and upheld. Silko used Robert to ensure that Josiah's legacy would be passed on to Tayo. Tayo would carry on and complete Josiah's legacy. Josiah's legacy is in the land and animals especially the cattle. Tayo would learn from Josiah the very basic idea principals of interconnectivity. The Laguna believed that everything was interconnected and was important, nothing was without a purpose. In the hunting scene that involved Josiah, Robert, and Tayo, a specific ritual was

carried out. To paraphrase the text “they took pinches of cornmeal from Josiah’s leather pouch and sprinkled the cornmeal on the nose and feed the deer’s spirit to show love and respect; otherwise, the deer would be offended” (Silko 47). The reason was so that the deer would not become offended and disappear the following season. Killing for sport was out of the question. Kristin Herzog remarked that “Tayo has been shown by his uncle Josiah –another male figure, who is gentle and caring-that violence is senseless” (29). The treatment of the deer shows a tremendous amount of respect by Robert, Josiah and Tayo. On a second level they are engaging in conservation by killing only a single deer rather than many. The meat would be eaten and the killing was not for sporting reasons or amusement.

The Laguna did not believe in sport hunting or wanton destruction of resources. Herzog remarked that that the Laguna were “a people whose men are expected to be sensitive as well as strong, independent of judgement and yet conscious of community roots and needs” (29-30). A balance is required in order to meet the Laguna standards. Robert’s stability allows Tayo to reflect upon Josiah’s memory, which is part of the healing process. According to Lynch; “even though Uncle Josiah is dead when Tayo returns, his persistence in Tayo’s memory enables Tayo to recover his health” (142). Lynch also remarked that “as Tayo encounters various situations, he recalls the stories and seemingly casual comments Josiah had uttered that now provide a moral map for traversing the complex, desolate, and perilous environment of post-war Laguna”(142). Memory is a powerful tool especially when traversing a very difficult area. According to Swan “as Josiah’s stories recur, they continually refresh and inform his cherished place in Tayo’s mind” (42). Josiah was still teaching and informing Tayo even after dying.

However Tayo's memories of Josiah could not persist without Robert's help. Memories are important in helping Tayo recover, but without focus the memories cannot persist at all. Silko has Tayo help Robert in order to keep Josiah's memory alive. Silko wrote that "a few days before the end of May he (Tayo) told them he was going to the ranch to stay" (202). Silko's intention is to separate Tayo from the temptations such as drinking and at the same time reconnect with the traditional culture. Robert's reaction was subtle, but very positive reaction. Silko writes that "Robert nodded; he was busy with the fields at new Laguna, and this way, Tayo could look after the cattle and new calves" (202). Tayo was also starting to fulfill Josiah's main dream of having cattle that were drought resistant. Raising cattle has often been considered a male activity even outside of the Laguna people and its culture.

The cattle carry a strong significance and are different than what Silko has the white ranchers raise in her novel. According to Peter G. Beidler in regards to Silko's white ranchers; the "white ranchers raise stupid Herefords that are ill adapted to desert terrain and available food supplies, then fence them and corral them so they cannot run free"(17). Basically the white ranchers of Silko's novel do not understand the lay of the land and do not know anything about the climate. Additionally the attitude of Silko's white ranchers comes into play. Beidler remarks that the "white ranchers' initial response to the hardier and more adaptable Mexican cattle is to make sport of them" (17). The white disregard for animal life is completely opposite of the way that the Laguna treat their animals. Cattle and other animals symbolize an order as to how connected Tayo is to the Laguna Culture. The cattle would represent the highest possible connectivity to the Laguna Culture. Cattle require a considerable amount of care and are large which

requires respect. However Tayo is not always respectful of cattle or other animals. According to Beidler; “Tayo’s lack of respect for animals carries over into his lack of respect for his own” (19). In the beginning Tayo was very disconnected and borderline suicidal. Beidler remarks of Tayo that; “as a result of his war experience, he has come to think of himself as useless and inanimate” (19). Tayo may be breathing, but he is not really alive or connected. Through the course of the novel Tayo would become more connected with animals and nature. Beidler remarks of Tayo that “the animals he comes most dramatically to imitate, of course, are the hardy Mexican cattle, those cattle are closer to nature than are the stupid Herefords” (21). The closer Tayo is to nature, the more connected he becomes. The Mexican cattle were described as “descendants of generations of desert cattle, born in dry sand and scrubby mesquite, where they hunted water the way desert antelope did” (Silko 68). Silko’s Mexican cattle show adaptability as well as being perfectly suited to their environment. The likening of the cattle to the desert antelope shows the connectivity to the rest of the natural world.

A Laguna male learns a great deal through the cattle and other animals. According to Beidler “because by observing the animals Tayo has learned what to accept and what to resist, the world stays intact” (22). An order has been established and helps to guide Tayo. Without order there is no chance of stability and raising cattle truly is a male Laguna activity that helps to sustain the community. Tayo’s return to stability is partly connected to the cattle. Without the cattle rising to help stabilize Tayo there is no connectivity or for that matter any order. Tending the cattle is also taking care of Josiah’s legacy and keeping it alive. Through the cattle Tayo starts to reconnect back to the Laguna male endeavors which bring Tayo back to the community. Josiah’s cattle were

very different and were a type of hybrid. According to Thomas Lynch “rather than raise pure-bred Herefords, as the white ranchers do, Josiah plans to raise a mixed breed of cattle combining the best of the meat-laden Herefords with the wily desert- smart survival skills of the Mexican cattle”(145). The ability to adapt is a key concept in Silko’s novel with the Mexican cattle being well suited to handle the Southwestern landscape. Silko will give Tayo the ability to adapt in a cultural landscape that has been altered by new influences and events. Tayo was responsible for the cattle and had help from Robert. Swan remarked that Robert “helps in caring for the livestock and gathering firewood, and assists Tayo in his search for Josiah’s spotted cattle” (43). Robert and Tayo work together to keep Josiah’s legacy and teachings alive. The Mexican cattle reflect Silko’s idea that hybridity can survive and thrive. Tayo is not alone as he tries to reintegrate himself back into the community.

Chapter III

The World Gets a Little Bigger: Looking at the Start of the Restoration and the Laguna Community

Ku'oosh, a medicine man within the Laguna Community and Tayo's grandmother has requested Ku'oosh's help. Ku'oosh as a representative of the Laguna would agree to talk with Tayo and see what could be done to help Tayo. The initial meeting allowed Tayo to start acknowledging the horrors he faced. According to the text Tayo declares that; "I'm sick, but I never killed any enemy. I never touched them" (Silko 33). Modern warfare is impersonal and at times there is no way to know who may have killed whom. War trauma can be horrific and it is often difficult for an individual to talk to someone who has not experienced anything similar. Tayo wants to explain in great detail what had happened to him, but could not as Silko would not allow it. Silko wrote that "but the old man would not have believed white warfare-killing across great distances without knowing who or how many had died" (33). Tayo fought in a modern war that was vastly different than the past. The text remarks that "it was all too alien to comprehend, the motors and big guns" (Silko 33) that "the old man would not have believed anything so monstrous" (Silko 33). Modern war is incomprehensible given how much carnage and

distance is involved. Only an individual who has fought in a modern war can really understand the horrors that are inflicted. Tayo could not explain to Ku'oosh how modern warfare looks like up close and very personal. Even if Silko had allowed Tayo to speak about the horrors of war that he had witnessed, the trauma would have had to be exhaustively examined. Ku'oosh was not intended to be the last part of Tayo's long journey. Tayo would need to start to examine his past in order to heal the present. The past was not just the memories that Tayo held, but also the stories that he had been told as a child. Silko slowly begins to bring Tayo out the deep foggy haze that he is in by using Ku'oosh to begin the most difficult part of the journey. Although Ku'oosh could not restore Tayo, the process of reawaking identity had begun to take hold. The process that was not a rigid formula had started to take a more pronounced form.

The way that Silko started the healing process was to a degree unexpected. The meeting between Ku'oosh and Tayo was awkward and even a little clumsy. Ku'oosh was a little difficult for Tayo to understand. According to the text Ku'oosh, "spoke softly using the old dialect full of sentences that were involute with explanations of their origins" (Silko 31). Every explanation would take a considerable amount of time and would be necessary. More importantly Silko is jarring both Tayo and the reader. A reader's expectation would be that Silko would have Ku'oosh try to talk to Tayo about the difficulties he had encountered rather than using complex language that appears to lead away from the problem. Silko was having Ku'oosh talk to Tayo about the trauma that he had experienced by bring up the more distant past as a way of moving towards the war horrors. Silko wanted to bring Tayo to wholeness slowly as opposed to a rapid ascent. Ku'oosh also made Tayo very uneasy. The text remarks that Tayo "could feel

shame tightening in his throat” (Silko 32). However Silko was ensuring that Tayo was slowly beginning to remember things from the past. Tayo remembered the cave where the bats flew out of at sunset. Silko writes Tayo “nodded to the old man because he knew this place” (Silko 32). Ku’oosh was starting the slow and arduous process of restoring Tayo, but could not restore Tayo by himself. Silko used Ku’oosh to tell and reintroduce Tayo the most important principals of Laguna Culture. Silko did not intend for Ku’oosh to heal Tayo, but to reawaken the past in order to heal Tayo. Additionally Silko used Ku’oosh to reintroduce to the idea of connectivity between the Laguna and the earth. Ku’oosh’s words are very telling. He remarks “but you know, grandson, the world is fragile” (Silko 32). The idea that the Laguna world is delicate and intertwined is important. Ku’oosh would also tell Tayo that he was “afraid of what will happen to all of us if you and the others do not get well” (Silko 35). The concern and fear for the trauma that Tayo and other men of the Laguna Community experienced while fighting in the Pacific is understandable. The Laguna Community is in danger in and the community is not sure as to help Tayo and the other veterans.

To some readers and critics, Ku’oosh might appear to be an almost wasted character. The lack of dialogue as well as the way Ku’oosh is presented by Silko causes some readers and critics to be dismissive. The text remarks that Ku’oosh’s “language was childish, interspersed with English words” (Silko 31-32). Most readers would be looking for a medicine man to speak with authority and not to sound childish. Silko would appear to be mocking her own character. Surprisingly Ku’oosh is seen towards the end of the novel. There is no dialogue between Tayo and Ku’oosh, only narration. Tayo was told in narration form that “he could have water, but no food; he was not to leave the kiva”

(Silko 239). Tayo had been speaking about his journey to the men of the community for a good part of the day. The lack of dialogue is surprising since Tayo had rejoined the community. Additionally the men seemed eager to know every detail of the Tayo's journey and yet Ku'oosh is not allowed by Silko to say anything even to the men of the community. Ku'oosh's direct interaction that contains dialogue with Tayo is quite limited, but Ku'oosh does care about Tayo. The reader is told by Grandma that "old man Ku'oosh came around the other day. He said maybe pretty soon you should have something to tell them" (Silko 203). Clearly Silko shows the reader that Ku'oosh cares but has not been allowed to speak. Ku'oosh has the least amount of dialogue of all of the male characters in Silko's *Ceremony*. Surprisingly Silko also has Ku'oosh speak in English when any dialogue is present. This sends a message that suggests that Silko is implying that the community is at a loss as to how to reintegrate Tayo. There is also a sense that the Laguna culture is severely impacted by cultural influences and Silko is suggesting that Ku'oosh is also at a loss as to how to explain things to Tayo. Neither English nor Laguna seem to be able to totally explain the situation.

Silko's Ku'oosh is also a reserved character and as a result is often misinterpreted. Alexandra Ganser remarks that "Ku'oosh is much more traditional and conservative; he fails to transform his rituals to meet the demands of contemporary ethnic identity-construction" (152). Basically Ganser is saying that Silko's Ku'oosh is a rigid character and cannot change. Moreover Ganser remarks that Ku'oosh is "unable to offer any prospects for how to live in this world" (152). Even though Silko did not allow Ku'oosh to give Tayo advice as to how to live, she allowed Ku'oosh to open Tayo to start the healing process. According to Silko; "the old man only made him certain of something he

had feared all along, something in the old stories” (35). On a very basic level it would appear that Ku’oosh made things worse for Tayo. Tayo fears he has done something gravely wrong and that it might be somewhere in one of the old childhood stories that he grew up with. On a second deeper level Tayo is starting to think about the Laguna culture and its meaning. Silko has Tayo trying to remember the culture and the past. Silko wants to start the restoration at a very basic level and is having Tayo about his childhood and the stories he had learned.

For Silko, Ku’oosh is the proper starting point to begin Tayo’s restoration. She gave Ku’oosh a deep knowledge of Laguna culture and its meaning by making Ku’oosh a medicine man. Silko wanted Tayo to relearn basic Laguna culture before advancing him to a more complex and advanced stage. According to Jeff Karem, “the medicine man Ku’oosh describes world to Tayo as fragile using a Laguna word that the narrator explains is filled with intricacies of a continuing process and with strength inherent in spider webs woven across paths through sand hills”(26). Silko knows that Tayo’s journey requires him to have a basic understanding of his culture. Everything in the world is strongly interconnected and is part of a larger process. Because everything in the Laguna world is interconnected, the process must be explained. Karem also remarks that “Ku’oosh also finds a similar interdependence characteristic of language: it took a long time to explain the fragility and intricacy because no word exists alone and the reason for choosing each word had to be explained with about why it must said this certain way (26). Words are extremely important to the Laguna People because of their meaning and how they convey understanding. Silko wanted Ku’oosh to impress upon Tayo and the reader that both words along with their meaning are extremely important to the Laguna

Culture. Apparently there is more to Silko's Ku'oosh than what most critics see. Language and its meaning are very important to understand. Ku'oosh was giving Tayo the basic reintroduction back into Laguna society as Tayo had to understand the importance of language. Language connects people and is intertwined with culture. Additionally understanding the meaning of a language connects a person to the culture. The process had to start at a more basic level before advancing. Ku'oosh is not so clumsy after all. Ku'oosh gave Tayo an important start in dealing with the traumatic events that had been endured.

Chapter IV

Leaving the Community in order to return: Trauma, Alienation, and Culture

Meet

Trauma can come from multiple sources and is not necessarily tied to a singular event. According to Michelle Satterlee “Tayo’s trauma is portrayed as a result of his experiences in war, the death of his cousin Rocky and Uncle Josiah, ethnic tensions between Indians and whites in the American Southwest as well as a result of a larger tribal- mythic forces of Indian witchery or evil that have produced imbalances in contemporary American Society”(73). Tayo was not just dealing with the effects of war, but also tensions that were simmering below the surface. Pressure was already present long before Tayo entered into combat and the experience of war was the tipping point that brought everything to a head. According to Satterlee, “the protagonist’s individual trauma points toward and at times symbolically mirrors the cultural of Native American’s social and economic oppression and displacement based on racial heritage”(74). Satterlee is saying that Tayo’s alienation and trauma are a reflection that mirrors the difficulty that Native Americans faced. However Satterlee also says that “on yet another level, Tayo’s trauma and recovery are intertwined in a relationship to the land and situated within a tribal-mythical narrative that reenacts (and rewrites) Laguna mythic creation stories,

often involving Yellow Woman”(74). The deities that the Laguna worshiped were female and access to the religious aspect of Laguna Society was handled by the men. Satterlee also said that “the land is a crucial place for Tayo’s recovery and reintegration of the past” (75). Silko wants Tayo to recover and part of the recovery requires a traditional aspect.

Both the working of the land and religious access are through the men and play an extremely important role in Laguna culture. Without the land there is no connection to other aspects of Laguna culture. The trauma that Tayo has is difficult and the men are ones who will be doing a great deal of the work. According to Satterlee: “neglect from his family and society contributes to Tayo’s trauma and fuels the return of traumatic memories that continue to disrupt the protagonist’s cohesive sense of self” (77). Textually the relationship between Tayo’s Aunt and Tayo shows and magnifies Satterlee’s comment. Even though there has been neglect and abuse, the men are still working. Satterlee remarks that “Ku’oosh prompts Tayo to tell his story, emphasizing the power of language, specifically Laguna language that values interconnections of each word in a story” (79). Land, religion, and words are all vital to the Laguna culture. Silko had Ku’oosh start at a very basic level to begin the healing process.

Silko wanted Tayo to start at the beginning in order to heal and rejoin the Laguna community. Silko was no going to rush Tayo into recovery. Satterlee remarks that “through direct contact with the environment Tayo comes to better terms with his role in war and his community” (82). The environment is a very important in that it reconnects Tayo to the Laguna culture. Another important aspect is story telling. Satterlee declares “Silko’s novel suggests that the action of telling the story for Tayo is crucial for his

survival and recovery from war and other forces of witchery” (82). Words are a fundamental aspect of Laguna culture. Satterlee also declares that “storytelling to preserve identity because it brings together the pieces of Tayo’s past within cultural and historical frameworks that help him understand the traumatic events” (82). In other words, storytelling allows Tayo to express and release his pain while at the same time come to terms with the traumatic events that had occurred in his life. When Silko had Ku’oosh meet Tayo the journey was not very far along. Only the stories from Tayo’s childhood could be slowly awakened.

Silko wants Tayo to reexamine the past in order to deal with his present situation. While Ku’oosh cannot cure the problem directly, he does aid Tayo and prepares Tayo by reminding him of the importance of words and stories. Silko knows the importance of words and stories are for her character Tayo. Satterlee says that “in *Ceremony*, storytelling functions as a healing ceremony that unifies multiple histories into a restorative wholeness” (84). Telling stories can be difficult especially if the story is traumatic. Silko knew that Tayo was going to need additional help in understanding both himself and Laguna Culture. Betonie, a Navajo medicine man would give Tayo the help he needed. Betonie’s introduction to Tayo is quite indirect. Silko has Tayo’s Grandmother as the one who introduces the reader to Betonie. Grandma remarks that “old man Ku’oosh knows him, and he thinks this Betonie might help him (Tayo)” (Silko 107). Silko never allows the reader to see the conversation between Ku’oosh and Tayo’s grandmother. However the implied conversation does show that Ku’oosh had not given up on Tayo. Additionally we are seeing a great deal of flexibility. Silko put Betonie outside of the Laguna Culture as a way of introducing new ideas into a very small world.

Ganser remarked that “Betonie is one of the characters in Ceremony who is privileged in the negotiation of traditions-of memories and of heritages” (152). Betonie is not an exiled Navajo, but one who lives apart from his people and lives in a distant area. Silko gave Betonie an advantage by setting him slightly apart. The lack of unnecessary influences would allow for more open discussion. Silko’s Betonie also surprised her other characters. Tayo’s Aunt had asked “what kind of medicine man like that, in the foothills north of the ceremonial grounds” (Silko 107). The distance is not only geographical, but also symbolic.

Chapter V

Reawaking and reintegrating back into Laguna Culture and Society

Betonie is the most important male figure that Tayo would encounter during his journey to become whole. Betonie would explain in more detail and in a different way, what Ku'oosh initially started. Both Tayo and Betonie have a great deal in common. According to Ganser, "Tayo and Betonie, due to their being cross-bloods, are placed at a certain distance from their respective communities" (153). The distance also allows a certain perspective to emerge. Ganser continues by saying that the distance enables Tayo and Betonie to "develop a more inclusive worldview, which counteracts dichotomization –just as they themselves cannot be placed into dichotomous categories of ethnicity and of cultural belonging" (153). Since neither man can be neatly placed into any one category, both are free from labels. The freedom from labels allows an individual to move about more easily, which allows for the meeting of needs. Betonie had much to teach Tayo before he could realize and reclaim his identity as well as his place with the community.

Silko was going to separate Tayo from the Laguna community in order to finish the restoration process. According to Silko; "old Betonie's place looked down on all of it; from the yellow sand rock foothills the whole town spread out below" (107). At the same time Silko is showing the symbolic nature of Tayo's visit. She still has her protagonist at

a distance, but he is very close to restoration. At first Tayo is leery of Betonie and it is easy to see why such leeriness existed. According to the text “Betonie didn’t talk the way Tayo expected a medicine man to talk. He didn’t act like a medicine man at all” (Silko 109). Remember Ku’oosh did not really seem to meet Tayo’s expectations or for matter the reader’s expectations as well. Silko’s intension is not only shaking her protagonist and the reader, but also to move away from old ideas. Silko’s characters require a suspension of expectations. Betonie had taken Tayo by complete surprise and given Tayo his first lesson. The lesson in openness would come very quickly. Eventually Tayo would look into Betonie’s eyes and find something that was surprising. To Tayo’s shock, Betonie’s eyes were “hazel like his own” (Silko 109). Betonie would explain why his eyes were hazel. He said that his “grandmother was a remarkable Mexican with green eyes” (Silko 109). Until that exchange Tayo thought he was the only one who was biracial. Betonie showed Tayo that he was not alone and that there were others like him.

Silko ensured that Betonie could easily relate to Tayo and understands the “other” label. He has long been beloved by critics as the one who helps Tayo complete his long journey. Moreover Betonie also shows the strengths of being the one who is viewed as an outsider. Hardly anyone pays attention to an outsider. According to Ganser “in *Ceremony* Silko uses various characters of mixed ancestry and emphasize their outstanding qualities as agents of cultural, social, and historical transition” (153). Betonie is an agent of transition because he understands the notion of the outsider because he is an outsider himself. An agent of transition is very much like a Laguna male is supposed to be, caring, flexible, gentle, and mobile. The needs of the people in a time of change have to be met and an agent of transition cannot afford to be stationary. Tayo cannot make the transition

to an agent of change alone. According to Ganser, “neither fully integrated into the Laguna Pueblo community and far from being accepted by white hegemony, Tayo’s painful task is to create a sense of self that transcends internalized stereotypes of the tragic half-breed: he has to subvert these ascriptions in order to generate self-respect and social agency”(153). While Silko has not neatly placed Tayo into a singular category, she does intend to move Tayo towards being able to traverse the entire notion of categorization by using Betonie.

Silko uses Betonie to instruct Tayo in what he needs to reject as well as accept in regards to cultural ideas. The ability to accept and reject cultural ideas creates both balance and flexibility. Flexibility was already needed by a Laguna male; now add being “other” to the mix and flexibility becomes very important. According to Ganser, “in *Ceremony*, the cross blood- as a direct embodiment of transition and border-crossing –is privileged in the constant accommodation to and of a (postmodern) world that is complex, fragile, and always changing in its design”(156). The ability to navigate worlds is important and can help others at the same time. Ganser declares that “the stories Tayo is told re/shape his sense of self, and in turn, the stories he himself constructs and, at the end of the book, tells the Laguna elders carry the potential to re/write tribal history, as they subvert the manifold dichotomizations that penetrate Western worldviews” (156). Helping others to navigate the world also helps to eliminate false perceptions that are brought by outsiders who do not know the Laguna people. Ganser remarks of Tayo that “from his status of in-betweenness, he is bound to confront both oppressor and oppressed, both the white hegemonic system and non –WASPS- especially America’s most paradoxical other, its indigenous people” (157). In a sense, Tayo becomes a new Laguna

because he is able to navigate both the traditional Laguna landscape and the external modern landscape with Betonie's help. Tayo's flexibility would be extremely important in order to overcome new influences that were undermining the Laguna Community. New influences on a culture may be subtle at first, but then grow quite visible. Betonie understood how quickly a landscape could change and passed the knowledge on to Tayo. The Laguna landscape was changing and not for the better considering many of the Laguna veterans were returning home traumatized and in some cases violent. Betonie has shown Tayo's different way of engaging the cultural change. According to Ganser "these figures in Silko's book do not counter cultural trauma with violence; in contrast, they reject violent acts in order to break the traumatic spell"(157). Destructive living along with violence is avoided. Falling into deep despair that can trigger violence is also avoided because the ability to traverse difficult landscapes has been learned. Tayo's education under Betonie reveals that though the landscape may be incredibly difficult to traverse, progress can be made.

Silko uses Betonie to teach Tayo how to traverse the modern world while still maintaining his identity. Ganser says that "hybridization is everywhere in *Ceremony*, from its formal properties to and multi-vocal narration to the many fragmented and/or traumatized personalities that either withdraw to stories of loss, despair, hatred, and violence, and thus are destined to die, or embrace their fragmentation and work with rather than against this phenomenon in that they create and livable stories" (157). Silko has Tayo and Betonie embrace their biracial nature and they are able to adjust. Tayo's action and Betonie's response was the start of the rapport between the two men. Betonie was slowly beginning to draw Tayo out, but the process would take a considerable

amount of time. At one point Tayo was nearing suicidal thinking. According to the text, “if there was no one left to trust, then he had no reason to live” (Silko 113). Silko had put Tayo at the lowest point possible, which allowed for Tayo to discuss his guilt and the horrors of war. Tayo remarked that “my uncle Josiah was there that day” (Silko 114). Tayo finally acknowledged to Betonie the burden that was so heavy. Additionally Tayo remarks that Josiah “died because there was no one to help him search for the cattle after they were stolen” (Silko 114). For the first time the reader sees why Tayo was so distraught. Tayo also said of Josiah that “he loved me. He loved me, and I didn’t do anything to save him” (Silko 114). Silko is having Tayo acknowledge the difficult childhood that causes trauma. Tayo is also acknowledging that the land, animals, and people are all interconnected.

Tayo was at the point where he understood that he was part of something greater than himself. According to the text “his sickness was only part of something larger, and his cure would only be found in something great and inclusive of everything” (Silko 116). In order to become whole again Tayo was going to have to reach out. For Tayo reaching out deeper than before would finish the healing process. In order for to finish the healing process, Tayo needed to understand that the world was not rigid and that a balance along with responsibility was needed in order to survive. Silko has Betonie introduce the concept of witchery as a way to balance the world and encourage responsibility. Betonie remarked to Tayo that “witchery works to scare people, to make them fear growth” (Silko 116). Compliancy combined with fear hampers growth. Betonie also remarks that “some people act like witchery is responsible for everything that happens, when actually witchery only a small portion” (Silko 120). The text Betonie

said that “it is a matter of transitions” (Silko 120). Tayo would push himself to move closer to restoration. According to Monica Avila; “Tayo begins to heal when he is able to leave himself open and vulnerable to the forces of myth” (54). The myths contain the ideals of the female deities and shape the culture. In other words, Tayo must embrace the stories that he was taught as a child. The lessons imparted from the stories are part of the Laguna Culture and Tayo would have to reengage the Laguna Culture in order to become whole. Avila also states that “interestingly, by losing himself he is able to become whole” (54). The old Tayo who felt rejection and frustration at every turn becomes transformed. Avila also writes that “once he lets go of his personal barriers and lets the stories manifest themselves, he is able to see the path for the future” (55). Betonie explained to Tayo how balance works by using an abstract and concrete concept. Betonie started by using a ceremony as an example. Betonie remarked that “at one time, the ceremonies as they had been performed were enough for the way the world was then; but after the white people came, elements in this world began to shift; and it became necessary to create new ceremonies” (Silko 116). Adjustments are required in order to keep the ceremonies going as the times change and new influences can create pressure. Additionally Silko is conveying that without a change in ceremony, reality cannot be acknowledged. Betonie remarked that “long ago when the people were given these ceremonies, the changing began, if only in the aging of the yellow gourd rattle” (Silko 116). The point that Silko is making through Betonie is changes to a ceremony are often subtle, but still happen. A change in ceremony is only to be done with great care. Silko also has Betonie remark that he “made changes in the rituals” (Silko 116) and that “people mistrust this greatly, but only this growth keeps the ceremonies strong” (Silko 116). Silko never advocates a

complete abandonment of a ceremony within her text. She does however reject outside influences that cause harm and sets Tayo on a course that embraces a Laguna identity in regards to ceremonies and allows for adjustments as they are needed.

Betonie is also emphasizing change as a form of flexibility that is important for a Laguna man to embrace. According to Karem; “Betonie emphasizes to Tayo that that the old ceremonies themselves must be revised, that change itself is a critical tool in his quest” (27). Betonie is acknowledging that nothing stays the same and in order to survive, one must make adjustments. The ceremonies that remain stagnant eventually die off and can become a reflection of greater problems such as deep tensions with neighboring groups and people. Ceremonies are important, but so is interaction with people. Betonie declared that “you don’t write off all the white people, just like you don’t trust all the Indians” (Silko 118). The point that Betonie is making is that assumptions are harmful. More importantly Betonie is telling Tayo that his perspective has to change in order to overcome the trauma that has occurred. Karem remarks that “by giving Tayo a perspective on his problems that extends beyond his interiority, Betonie forges a renewed connection among Tayo, the land, and the world” (27). Betonie is having Tayo look at the larger picture rather than just at his own problems. Viewing the larger picture can move an individual away from simply dwelling on his or her own problems.

Tayo was not the only returning vet who had traumatic war experiences. Tayo however is a reflection of the changes that were affecting the Laguna community and Betonie was trying to show him that he was not alone. The change in ceremonies was to show adaptability and that change can bring healing. Karem remarks that “according to Betonie, because of changes in the world it became necessary to create new

ceremonies...things which don't shift and grow are dead things" (27). In other words, change is inevitable and that which does not adjust is dead. Betonie is reiterating the Laguna concept of male flexibility. Recovery is dependent on flexibility. According to Satterlee; "the language to tell Tayo's story is rooted in the interconnections between and narrative modes, which embrace plurality and hybridity, rather than singularity" (89). The world had changed and flexibility was required. Additionally Satterlee says that "the coherence of identity and memory is achieved through a collaboration of cross-cultural world views that create new ways of comprehending and representing traumatic events" (89). Hybridity is necessary in order to understand how the world changes especially after traumatic event. Moreover hybridity and flexibility have applications in other areas as well. Problem solving especially in smaller communities dealing with rapid and sudden changes often requires a hybrid and flexible approach in order to deal with the problem or problems.

A Laguna male is not expected to stay in one place for a long period of time. According to Swan; "men move into and out of the corporate web of relationships keyed to their mothers, sisters, and wives" (43). Laguna men have multiple responsibilities to the women of their family. While a Laguna male has responsibilities, those responsibilities are not all in a neatly centralized location. Changing the ceremonies also shows an attentiveness and sensitivity to the needs of a community in the midst of a changing landscape. Betonie's demonstration of flexibility also shows that he is connected to the people and to nature. Tayo was beginning to relearn the Laguna flexibility that was required in order to rejoin the community. Flexibility leads to caring about others in the community and meeting the needs as they arise. The end result is that

the needs of the community are met and that the community is balanced. A changed ceremony meets the needs of the current generation. Betonie was reminding Tayo of his role within the community. Even though a male Laguna is fluid, he is grounded in the religious and ceremonial knowledge. The religious knowledge combined with flexibility keeps the ceremonies and people from becoming stagnant. A great deal of caring is also needed when a ceremony needs to be changed. Betonie was reintroducing a sense of balance with an emphasis on responsibility. Laguna men were expected to lead in matters that involved the religious faith aspect of the culture.

Silko's men are not just responsible leaders in the physical world, but also in mythical/spiritual world of the Laguna. The poetry that runs the length of *Ceremony* is used not only to disrupt the text, but give a parallel world where male figures have a great deal of responsibility. The behavior that is exhibited by Humming Bird is the ideal for the Laguna Man. According to the text "Hummingbird looked at all the skinny people. He felt sorry for them. He said you need a messenger. Listen, I'll tell you what to do" (Silko 65-66). Hummingbird acts as a community leader, who starts the process of getting the rain to return. Hummingbird also gets help from Fly. According to the text "Fly will go with me, Hummingbird said. We'll go see what she wants." Just like the Laguna men, the mythical men are taking on the responsibility of making sure that the needs of the people are being taken care of. Meeting the needs of an individual or group under stress is a challenge. The individual or group may need to apply changes in order to have a need or needs met. Once the need or needs are met, those responsible move towards the next task.

Chapter VI

Pressure: Navigating both the Laguna and Outside World at the same time

Silko was using Robert, Ku'oosh and Betonie to carefully guide Tayo towards wholeness, which was the opposite of many of the returning Laguna veterans. Most were alienated and completely disconnected from the Laguna Culture that they had grown up with as a result of both fighting in the war and coming into contact with ideas that . Tayo was different and as a result had an enemy. Emo was Tayo's complete opposite in regards to working towards wholeness and was a composite of something completely different from a Laguna. The animosity between Tayo and Emo is well documented by numerous critics. War can change an individual for the worse. According to Herzog, "when Tayo and his comrades have to fight in the Pacific jungles, spirit is trained and drained out of them, making them fit to kill blindly"(33-34). In other words they become mindless killers. The worst aspect is that according Herzog is that "being cut off from their physical and spiritual roots, some of them, like Emo, become perverted" (34). The perversion distorts reality and causes tension. Alexandra Ganser remarks that "Emo measures Tayo against internalized stereotypes that are designated by the whites-the drunk and crazy Indian" (154). There is a reason that Emo is so hostile to Tayo. Ganser states "Emo prides himself on being a full breed" (154). Even though Emo is full blooded

Laguna, he does not act like a Laguna male. Tayo may be biracial and an easy target, but Emo is also a target. Ganser also remarks that Emo “cannot dissociate himself from white categorizations, he constantly tries to live up to and eventually kills Pinkie” (154). Emo is frustrated and violent while trying to live up to a warped, shifting ideal that will never accept him.

Emo represents the complete opposite of an ideal Laguna male. His world is distorted due to a combination of war trauma along with believing in unrealistic, non-Laguna ideals that are unattainable and doesn't care about others. Silko also uses Emo to show how ideas and events can influence an individual for the worse. According to Swan, who partly quotes Silko remarks that “Emo had other war souvenirs –the Bull Durham sack containing teeth knocked out of the corpse of a soldier, a Japanese colonel”(48). Swan is showing an individual not only an individual with distorted sense of the world, but also a malicious individual, who takes a twisted pleasure in violating others. Emo is certainly not someone anyone would want to be around. Emo's behavior enrages Tayo. Swan says that “Tayo attacks the real slayer of his brother-Emo the witch, one of the destroyers” (48). Swan isn't name calling Emo, but is telling the reader that Emo is a representative of witchery.

Witchery is a very important in Silko's novel. Witchery is described as “the avoidance of responsibility” (Avila 54). The witches themselves seek to cause problems to hinder the individual from being responsible by any means necessary and at times in a very destructive manner. According to Avila, “in the Native American view, witches are those who intentionally do harm to others through destruction of the natural world” (54). However Silko's witchery does not have black cats and women on broomsticks. The

witchery that Silko portrays is more masculine leaning and is a textual device. Although there is spell casting as well as some potion lacing and secret meetings, Silko puts so much of her witchery into the open that it does not really qualify as that of a warlock or mage.

Additionally Silko's witchery is used to show the negative side of male. The Silko's parallel poem shows the result of Pa'caya'nyi deceiving the people. According to the poem "He (Pa'caya'nyi) asked the people, you people want to learn some magic? and the people said yes, we can always use some"(Silko 42). Silko's idea of magic in the case of Pa'caya'nyi is both deceptive and destructive to the people. The poem reads "our mother Nau'ts'ity'i was very angry over this over the way all of them even Ma'see'wi and Ou'yu'ye'wi fooled around with this magic" (Silko 44). An angry reaction and punishment is not surprising. However two male individuals with important responsibilities being deceived are surprising. Ma'see'wi and Ou'yu'ye'wi are described as being "twin brothers," (Silko 42) who "were caring for the mother corn altar" (Silko 42). Silko is showing that her version of male witchery can harm an entire group. At the same time Silko is reiterating what she is saying textually that growth is stopped and at the same time responsibility is ignored. Remember Silko had Betonie remark "witchery works to scare people, to make them fear growth" (Silko 116). Taking She is also showing that deception especially when men are deceived and avoid responsibility can cause many problems.

Silko's witchery device is also individualistic. While Emo, Silko's textual antagonist does not have the supernatural powers or any sort of charms as the mythical witches, Silko does allow Emo to inflict harm. Silko has provides an individual that likes

to hurt individuals. The parallel poem also provides a second mythical witch in the Gambler. The Gambler is described as “tall and had he had a handsome face” (Silko 158) and “in all ways the Gambler was very good to look at” (Silko 158). Basically the Gambler charms his victim before killing¹. Silko makes the Gambler very passive as well. The poem states that the Gambler’s “house was high in the peaks of the Zuni mountains and he waited for the people to wander up to his place (Silko 158). Just like Emo, the Gambler is very dangerous. While Tayo is almost restored; Emo has become completely lost through a combination of war as well as following an unrealistic set of ideals that have turned him into an individual who is only existing and not really living. Emo doesn’t just mutilate bodies, he kills people as well. When Emo murders Harley, we can clearly see the points made by Avila and Swan. The scene is extremely brutal and shows just how different Tayo and Emo really are.

Silko has Emo kill his victim slowly and relish the trauma he inflicts. Emo tells Harley “scream. Scream! Scream loud so he can hear you” (Silko 233). Telling Harley to scream is just the beginning for Emo. Silko wants to show Emo as being extremely brutal. According to the text Emo said “have some, buddy! As he shoved the bottle into Harley’s mouth” (Silko 233). Death would not come quickly for Harley. Emo’s brutality clearly shows what the critics are saying in their discussion about him. Basically Emo has no regard for life in any form. Avila remarks that “Emo words offer insight into his attitude: look what is here for us, look. Here’s mother Earth! Old dried-up thing!” (54). Emo is certainly not caring about anyone or anything. We might even call Emo the

¹ The Gambler has more patience than Emo. Additionally the Gambler gives his victim a poison laced cornmeal before killing the victim. While the Gambler is content to wait, Emo is more aggressive and focused on getting his victims. Both men are extremely dangerous. However Emo is only looking for a certain kind of victim.

embodiment of what Tayo might have become without help. Avila states that “Tayo relationship with Emo embodies his identity struggle and the struggle between witchery and the healing power of sacrifice” (54). Silko was showing the difference between having a strong sense of identity that is grounded in Laguna culture and an identity that isn’t connection to anything.

The struggle between Tayo and Emo is also one of being empowered and sanctioned by the Laguna Culture verses a destroying force that leaves nothing in its wake. Silko showed Emo to be detached from his identity by showing Emo’s treatment of a dead Japanese colonel and with the murder of Harley. According to Swan “Tayo must learn lessons of warfare with witchery and whites, so too must he understand the spiritual teachings and discipline requisite for ensuring respect and positive interactions (language) with the network of forces animating his environment”(50). For Tayo balance is the key to navigating his world. Emo has no balance and is empowered by something else altogether. Swan remarks that “Emo was empowered by teeth instead of scalps: Tayo could hear it in his voice when he talked about killing-how Emo grew with each killing” (49). Emo had never taken a scalp, but had ripped out teeth, but was no warrior. Silko’s intension was never to make Emo into a warrior. If Silko had intended for Emo to be Laguna warrior, she would not have had Emo rip out teeth and he would have been part of the scalp society. The scalp society according to Swan was where “Laguna warriors joined the scalp society or opi after they had slain or touched the enemy and taken the scalp” (49). Emo was so detached from the Laguna that he is completely separated. Emo has no sense of community whatsoever and is not about to help anyone.

By contrast Silko does not allow Tayo to become a killer who is killing for thrills and mutilating bodies. Silko has Tayo's movement as being toward wholeness and his identity is Laguna. Swan says that "Tayo's mastery of Laguna ideology rests on the balance between giving/taking or providing/killing in the masculine endeavors of warfare, raising livestock and hunting"(50). The balance is what separates the two men. Emo is certainly estranged from Laguna culture as Silko is using Emo to show the results of being lost. Tayo's journey shows that a strong male culture exists within the larger Laguna Culture along with balanced partnership with the women shows the strength of the Laguna people. Men can be nurturers and teachers. They are equally important to the women and take the responsibility of the religious aspect of the Laguna Community. Without the religion there is no community or balance for the Laguna. A lack of balance leads to a community that will eventually dissolve. A thriving community is able to deal with problems that arise.

Without the men's flexible mobility, the women cannot remain stable. The women are not helpless, but need the need the men in order to keep the culture balanced. Towards the end of Silko's novel, the reader sees that Tayo is fully part of the community. A request by Tayo's grandmother to Auntie shows that Tayo is accepted. Grandma said to Auntie, "dear, could you give Tayo that money in my pocket book? I think my stove is getting low on oil" (Silko 141). Even though the request is small, Tayo is being asked to fulfill an obligation, which indicates that he is accepted by both men and women. More importantly Silko is telling the reader that Tayo has more responsibility. Tayo can also navigate many places that most Laguna cannot navigate and is comfortable with being biracial.

Chapter VII

Reentering the Community: The Strength of the Male Laguna cultural influence

Silko has clearly shown that the male culture of the Laguna People is vibrant and flexible. The men are responsible for not only sustaining the Laguna Culture, but are the nurturers as well. Without the support of Robert, Tayo could not have returned to traditional male Laguna activities of ranching and farming. Everything to the Laguna People is interconnected. At every point in the journey Silko puts a strong male influence to surround Tayo. Silko had Josiah teach Tayo the ways of the Laguna, with Robert providing stability, the memories of Josiah would begin to help heal Tayo. Robert's support of Tayo was only the start of the journey. Tayo was going to have to be reconnected to the land in order to start restoration process. Robert's words and actions start to lay a basic foundation for Tayo's recovery. Silko had Robert become more than a stand in for Josiah because was a mutual respect between Robert and Tayo. Silko also placed Robert at important junctures in Tayo's journey as he was with Tayo when Tayo first met Betonie. While Silko did not have Robert entirely replace Josiah, Robert became the father figure that Tayo would need in order to be stabilized and restored. Robert helped Tayo to continue to carry on Josiah's legacy. Josiah was never far from Tayo and was constantly on Tayo's mind.

Josiah's memories would help Tayo navigate the difficult Laguna world that was under siege from outside influences that were putting a strain on the community. Silko gave Josiah the responsibility laying the foundation and instilling the Laguna ideals into Tayo. Josiah taught Tayo a great deal about interconnectivity between the Laguna people and the earth. Josiah's drought resistant cattle are his greatest legacy that was given to Tayo. The cattle represent Tayo's start towards becoming reconnected with traditional Laguna Culture. Caring for the cattle connected Tayo back to the earth and to the community. Tayo's sense of self both individually and within the community also returned. Silko shows how important the uncle influence is within her novel. For Silko the not only does Robert support Tayo, but readies him to engage with the community.

The community through Ku'oosh would also accept Tayo. While Silko shows Ku'oosh as being uncertain as to how to help Tayo, she uses Ku'oosh to give Tayo not only a more advanced understanding of Laguna Culture, but also reminds Tayo of language along with how it is intertwined with Laguna Culture. Although Silko did not allow Ku'oosh to heal Tayo directly; Silko used Ku'oosh to show the flexibility within the Laguna Community. Ku'oosh also started the process of helping Tayo remember the past. While the past may be quite painful there are still memories that were not so harsh. Ku'oosh also imitated the process to help Tayo remember the important Laguna belief that everything was interconnected. Additionally by having Ku'oosh recommend Betonie, Silko was showing that the Laguna Culture was flexible and wanted Tayo back. Silko could have easily allowed Ku'oosh to give up on Tayo, but did not. Ku'oosh did care about Tayo and Silko showed this caring by having Ku'oosh recommend Betonie.

The acceptance of the Laguna Community meant that Tayo was no longer a stranger and an outsider. Silko would have Betonie finish the process of restoring Tayo.

Without Ku'oosh laying the foundation, Betonie could not finish the restoration of Tayo. Silko's final male character Betonie was endowed with a great deal of understanding and like Tayo; Betonie was biracial and understood the difficulties that Tayo faced. Silko also used Betonie as the father figure Tayo never had. Betonie's Navajo and Mexican roots show flexibility as well as an understanding that would help Tayo. Betonie was an outsider just as Tayo was and showed Tayo how to be an understanding individual. Moreover Silko had Betonie teach Tayo how to navigate the world. The world was a very different place and Tayo was starting to see that being flexible was necessary to survive. His otherness would become an asset rather than a liability. Once Tayo began to understand what Betonie was teaching him, Tayo could immerse himself into the healing process. Everything that Betonie taught Tayo was part of a process that reinforced what Josiah taught and what Robert reinforced by standing in for Josiah; Ku'oosh's attempt to explain how everything was fragile and interconnected was clarified while being expanded. Silko positioned Tayo towards change and away from harmful ideas, which allowed Tayo to return to the community. Where he was once an outsider and is able to straddle the two different worlds as the result of his journey. Without the help of Robert, Ku'oosh and Betonie, Tayo would not have been able to rejoin the Laguna community. Silko gave Tayo help at every level to show the unformulated process of restoration that took place. Family, community, and the larger world were represented. The process dealing with both internal as well as external trauma

allowed Tayo to see the world differently while still maintaining a strong Laguna identity.

Critically we see Silko's men not as secondary characters, but active partners in the process of restoring Tayo. The Laguna men provide access to the religious side of the culture, so it is natural that they would take an active and partnering role in restoring Tayo. The only way back would be through male guidance that Silko gave Tayo. We also see Tayo's struggle embodied in the form of Emo, who is not the ideal Laguna. War had turned Emo into a detached; emotionless shell of a man, who could not truly live. In a sense Emo was an individual who had no emotions and did not even care for himself. Responsibility, flexibility, and compassion have been chosen over avoidance of responsibility. Tayo would be guided by caring men away from Emo and his followers. Tayo had completed the process to become whole with the help of Robert, Ku'oosh and Betonie. The men embraced Tayo and ensured that Tayo would become part of the community rather than separate from it. Silko had Tayo reject the more destructive aspects of American Culture and allowed Tayo was able to navigate between American culture and Laguna Culture. Tayo had been transformed by the traditional Laguna male culture and understood his place within it. As a transition agent Tayo could work between two very distinct worlds and in the process help the Laguna through the changes that were happening as a result of events and actions that were beyond the control of the Laguna. Tayo also understood he was an individual and that he mattered not only to his family, but the community as well. Silko had Robert, Ku'oosh, and Betonie contribute at various levels to ensure that Tayo's memories of Josiah would help in the restoration process. Silko could have chosen a far different route to restore Tayo.

Robert, Ku'oosh and Betonie reveal a fluid and flexible masculine culture that balances the women's stationary side. Silko's nurturing men ensure that the community is stable and that the needs of the community are met. Since Tayo could traverse multiple landscapes there is the possibility that he could engage and help the entire Laguna people. The only way that Tayo could reach the position of being an agent of transition was with the help of Robert, Ku'oosh and Betonie. Culture especially in small societies has a flexibility built in that allows for sudden changes. Agents of transition understand not only the internal cultural influence but also external sources that put pressure upon a community. They are within and slightly apart from the community which gives insight that the community cannot always see. Silko shows the Laguna people as having a flexible system that was willing to reach out to members of other communities in order to restore one of their own member's identity and place within the community.

Moreover Silko shows that the male side of Laguna culture had a transitory nature that could create transition agents. The difficulty comes from external sources that put pressure on the Laguna. Tayo's position was that he was considered "other" by the Laguna until he had regained his personal and identity within the community. Silko also allowed Tayo not only to become an agent of transition, but also regain his personal and community identity with the help of the Laguna male culture.

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