

Mosaic

an interdisciplinary critical journal



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Source: *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal*, Vol. 49, No. 3 (September 2016), pp. 1-17

Published by: University of Manitoba

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44030746>

Accessed: 06-03-2020 11:49 UTC

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This essay examines the politically disruptive voices in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*, arguing that her storytelling, which centres on "deferred action" as illustrated through the Freudian/Benjaminian notion of the return of the repressed, both undercuts the Euro-American notion of linear time involved with colonialist discourses and envisions healing by recollecting boundarylessness.

How and What to Recollect: Political and Curative Storytelling in Silko's *Ceremony*

JIN MAN JEONG

In a 1993 interview with Laura Coltelli, Leslie Marmon Silko notes that her novel *Almanac of the Dead* (1991) deals with the concepts of time and history in a manner that her first novel, *Ceremony*, only touched upon (131). In "Narrating Nationhood: Indian Time and Ideologies of Progress," Joseph Bauerkemper posits that, although many scholars have thoroughly explored the concepts of nonlinear, circular time in Native American texts, these scholars generally ignore the socio-political significances of these concepts (28). Taking into account Silko's view of her own work and Bauerkemper's critique of literary scholars, we can explore the political significances inherent in her representations of circular time in *Ceremony*. Without a doubt, the issue of circularity can be approached in terms not just of time, but also of place. However, in discussing the notion of deferred action, which means the past can only be properly understood after it is repeated retroactively in the present, this essay explores circularity through the dimension of time.¹

Since *Ceremony* was published in 1977, Native scholars have pointed out that Native Americans maintain their own unique notion of time that is not in accord with the Western European concept of linear time. At the annual meeting of the Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association held in Phoenix, Arizona in 1978, Carol Mitchell, Paula Gunn Allen, Martha Kimble, Virginia Randall, Larry Evers, and Wayne Ude delivered their consensus about the issue of the Native American notion of time as circularity (Sands et al. 63-70). They pointed out that Native Americans understand the world in terms of circularity, radically different from the understanding Western Europeans recognize. Nonetheless, this essay refers to Sigmund Freud and Walter Benjamin to highlight that Native Americans view the present not as a mechanical cycle of the past, but as a “forever becoming” (Bell 49), an incessant, retroactive transformation and re-creation of the past in a deferred way. The theoretical insights and frames of reference found in Freud and Benjamin, as they pertain to deferred action, are of particular use here for illuminating the meaning of Tayo’s experience of the return of the repressed with the help of a Navajo medicine man named Betonie in Silko’s novel.

In *Ceremony*, Silko tells a story about how deferred action can serve as a disruptive and recalcitrant force against the established notion of linear and chronological time that represents the cornerstone of the Euro-American-centric progressive model of history, a model that indeed served to nourish nineteenth-century colonial discourses on the “Vanishing Native Americans” in the United States. This theme of deferred action is established through the inner sufferings of *Ceremony*’s main character, Tayo. The novel begins with Tayo, a mixed-blood World War II veteran who is suffering from a deep sense of loss that is only worsening. His traumatic neurosis paves the way for the return of the repressed through the use of Native American ceremonies and stories. These curative breakthroughs, as executed by Betonie, are akin to homeopathic therapy in that the cure for Tayo’s pain is the application of the pain itself. Namely, the conscious return of the repressed is used to free Tayo from the burden of his unconscious return of the repressed. This paradoxical, homeopathic, and repetitive relationship allows us to see Tayo’s awakening of historical consciousness as well as the idea of deferred action.

Also explored in this essay is the question of what, exactly, is “the (historically) repressed” that the subject is summoned to remember as a way of envisioning the healing of the sufferings of people at both the individual and communal levels. This essay argues that Tayo’s awakening to the values of boundarylessness and hybridity as the origins of the repressed allows him to accomplish the political act—or ceremony—of undermining Euro-American geographical and racio-ethnic forced boundaries

while simultaneously acquiring regenerative powers from the re-creation of personal and communal stories.

As *Ceremony* begins, Tayo agonizes over a distressing dream that consists of events jumbled together in a non-chronological order. He hears a man singing in Spanish, repeating the words *Y volveré*,² and then some angry Japanese voices. He then hears the voices of the Laguna people, his uncle Josiah calling to him, Japanese soldiers yelling orders in a jungle, and women's voices. When he thinks he hears his mother's voice coming from the women, he starts to feel that he is going mad. However, the voices then change into unintelligible words and vanish, transformed into loud Jukebox music (5-6).

Integrating his past and present, Tayo's dream reflects his frustration over the loss of his loved ones: Josiah, Rocky, and his mother. Tayo returns from his service in World War II to his home in New Mexico only to find that his uncle Josiah died and Josiah's precious spotted cattle were lost during a six-year drought. This state of affairs reminds him of how, while fighting the Japanese in the war, he cursed the jungle rain in the Philippines that prevented his cousin Rocky's "oozing wounds" from drying (11). The qualm Tayo feels here comes retroactively as he remembers his cursing of the rain through the lens of the horrible drought in New Mexico. Moreover, the loss of Josiah and his cattle causes Tayo to relive his afflictive memory of losing both his mother and Rocky. The psychological damage he suffered from the loss of his mother and his cousin worsens after events like Josiah's death, the drought, and the loss of his cattle to the extent that he cannot properly recover from the trauma and falls into a deep neurosis. He struggles to find salvation from the painful memory through repetitive vomiting—a physical manifestation of his psychological efforts to clear his mind of his inner pain. The memory of his loss, however, fails to be expunged and continues to torment him incessantly: "He could get no rest as long as the memories were tangled with the present" (6). Ami M. Regier construes Tayo's vomiting as an effort "to evacuate knowledge and history from his body" (194). However, Tayo's psychic pain can also be interpreted as marking the trait of retroactive or deferred action, thus indicating a non-chronological and cyclic temporality. This deferred action does not conform to the idea of chronological time, which insists upon a beginning-middle-end structure. To the contrary, the action is another temporality that only subverts the traditional and established notion of time.

Notably, Silko was well informed on Freud's concept of deferred action as another temporality. In her interview with Linda Niemann in 1992, Silko confesses that she perused Freud's eighteen volumes when she felt blocked in her thinking while

writing *Almanac of the Dead* (109). Deborah Horvitz argues that Silko incorporates Freud's psychoanalytic theory of repetition, a compulsory repetition of unconscious contents in the present, into her novel (48-49). Even if it is not clear whether Silko was already and fully aware of Freud's theory when she wrote *Ceremony*, the novel is seen nonetheless as closely intertwined with the idea of the return of the repressed (or deferred action as another temporality) in the Freudian sense.

Freud explores this notion of another temporality in his "From the History of an Infantile Neurosis," where he discusses a case study of the so-called "Wolf Man," a pseudonym for Sergei Konstantinovitch Pankejeff, a Russian aristocrat from Odessa, and where he coins the notion of deferred action (*Nachträglichkeit*). According to this study, the Wolf Man's phobia of wolves stems from a wolf dream he experienced when he was four. Freud posits that a forgotten scene exists behind the content of the wolf dream. This content, or primal scene (*Urszene*), Freud argues, is actually the scene of the Wolf Man's parents engaging in sexual behaviour that the Wolf Man witnessed at the age of one-and-a-half. However, at such a young age, the patient was not capable of understanding the meaning of the primal scene, and instead took in its meaning only in a deferred way at the age of four, after having gained some knowledge of sex (37-38).

In his analysis, Freud posits that the wolf dream stems from the patient's wish to earn some sexual pleasure from his father. In other words, the dream (dis-)closes the Wolf Man's desire to want his father to do to him the same thing he has done to his mother. The Wolf Man's unconscious nucleus can be conceived as his passive attitude toward his father, originating from his identification with his mother when he initially observed the primal scene. Freud locates this unconscious desire within the twenty-five-year-old patient's remembrance of his childhood.

Crucial to note here is that the meaning of the primal scene does not present itself immediately when the Wolf Man observes the scene, but rather arises from retroactive action. The Wolf Man cannot even begin to grasp the meaning of the primal scene until he is four, when he has the wolf dream, and cannot fully comprehend the experience until he is twenty-five and receives Freud's analysis: "This is simply another instance of *deferred action*. At an age of one and half, the child receives an impression to which he is unable to react adequately; he is only able to understand it and to be moved by it when the impression is revived in him at the age of four; and only twenty years later, during the analysis, is he able to grasp with his conscious mental processes what was then going on in him" ("History" 45n1, *emph. mine*). Thus, a deferred action characterizes the Wolf Man's remembrance of the primal scene. The Wolf Man understands the primal scene retroactively after the scene recurs in his dream. The deferred action is a specific response to the triggering of the repressed

memory-traces of a past experience that had little effect on him at the time. Through the deferred action, the chronological order of time or the principle of causality is subverted.³

Jacques Derrida reads Freud's theory of deferred action in "Freud and the Scene of Writing," arguing that the unconscious text is "always already transcriptions" and "everything begins with reproduction." Derrida's logic of supplement, which means that meaning "is always reconstituted by deferral, *nachträglich*, belatedly, *supplementarily*" (211, *emph.* Derrida's), actually denies the pure presence of the origin and affirms the circularity and repetition accompanying transformation.

In *Ceremony*, deferred action can also be observed in Tayo's experience of the unconscious return of the repressed. This action calls into question the chronological (beginning-middle-end) order of time. The demonic and uncontrollable return of the repressed, as manifested in Tayo's illness, is treated by the medicine man, Betonie, who purposely does not eliminate Tayo's path to return to his oppressed origin. The narrator observes that Tayo's "sickness was only part of something larger, and his cure would be found only in something great and inclusive of everything" (125-26). According to Cathy Caruth, "the treatment of trauma requires the incorporation of trauma into a meaningful (and thus sensible) story" (117). Similarly, Alexandra Ganser notes that lost memories tend to recur through some demonic power, and the successful removal of trauma either deconstructs or restructures such memories and brings them to the conscious level (147). Silko, in *Ceremony*, suggests that Tayo can only be cured within the ethnic context of Native American tribes with Betonie serving as the helper through whom the momentous transition is made. As he listens carefully to his traumatic memories, Betonie helps Tayo see his own unconscious and repetitious memories within the broader context of history, thus rendering them conscious. Betonie heals Tayo's psychic wounds through the use of Native American ceremony (like the hoop ceremony) and storytelling, incorporating his trauma into historical Native American narratives and those experiences. In this respect, as Arnold Krupat points out, Tayo's journey to return to a culturally shared past attests to the novel's cyclical structure (41).

Incorporating Freud's perspective, it can be said that Tayo's nightmarish "dreaming is another kind of remembering" ("History" 51). Moreover, with Betonie's help, Tayo's traumatic remembrance is effectively treated and healed by being displaced into another sort of remembering inherent in Native American traditions. Betonie leads Tayo to have the experience of Native American ceremonies and Aboriginal stories. In Bruce Ballenger's account, the fusion of personal and tribal memories is worthwhile insofar as it allows the storyteller's memory to extend beyond the level of

one's personal life and experience (793). Similarly, Sean Kicummah Teuton (145, 148) and Reyes García (40) discuss the significance of Tayo's integration into the Laguna Pueblo society in terms of tribal experiences. Briefly, Betonie lets Tayo become aware of how to recollect. Like a dream, ceremony (or storytelling) is a circular mode of remembrance. However, while the former is unconscious and involuntary, the latter is exactly the opposite.

Thus, with Betonie's help, Tayo is able to manifest the return of the repressed that underlies his psychic wound. Here, the concept of homeopathy as an alternative to modern medical practices arises. Homeopathy is characterized by therapeutic repetition, based on the principle of "*similia similibus curantur*, like is cured by like" (Rumble 476). Betonie's cure for Tayo's illness—the return of the repressed—differs from the medical treatments prescribed by white doctors at the LA Veterans' Hospital, who use a nerve sedative that "drained memory" (15) from Tayo's mind. The events suggest that the destroyers aim to achieve total loss of memory (and/or stories) (Martin 141). This point is exemplified by the white teachers at the Indian reservation school who urge Tayo to disremember the Native American stories. In peril of being afflicted with tribal amnesia, the remedy against Tayo's ills is the return of the repressed itself. "Tayo's memory becomes," says Susan J. Scarberry, "the medicine which helps effect his cure" (22).

Tayo tells Betonie not only about the memories of the war that are tormenting him, but also of the deep sense of loss and the nervous breakdowns that accompany these memories. In David A. Rice's words, after listening carefully to Tayo's story, "Betonie is able to put together the relationship between Tayo's experience and the pervasive witchery in the world" (126). Tayo verbalizes the panic he felt when he believed he noticed Josiah's face among the dead Japanese soldiers. Betonie, in turn, responds to Tayo's confession: "It isn't surprising you saw him with them. You saw who they were. Thirty thousand years ago they were not strangers. You saw what the evil had done: you saw the witchery ranging as wide as this world" (124). When Tayo previously confides the same story to a white Army doctor, the doctor, approaching the story from a so-called "scientific" point of view, discounts it as a mere superstition (195). Betonie, on the other hand, suggests that once upon a time all of humankind coexisted peacefully without any distress from racism and colonialism. As time passed, however, the mischievous power of witcheries like racism and colonial discourses alienated people from each other. Betonie informs Tayo that he still remembers the World's Fair of 1904 in St. Louis, Missouri, where the Apache leader Geronimo was put on display as a captive (122). He tells of the old days when people were all linked through a firm brotherhood. However, gradually the white people,

deceived by wicked witchcraft, began to regard nature and Native Americans as mere objects of conquest, devastation, and manipulation, and intruded on these Natives' territories, drawing boundaries and plundering the Indian land. The references made to these events serve to illustrate how the whites forgot the fundamental boundarylessness of their previous existence; furthermore, through his memory of Geronimo, who had fought against the whites' encroachment upon their land, Betonie shows he has not forgotten the traumatic history of Native Americans.

In the latter half of *Ceremony*, thanks to Betonie's teaching, Tayo becomes more and more aware of the Native Americans' traumatic history and, as such, opens his own historical consciousness. After hearing Harley bemoan being swindled by a white into buying a lemon, Tayo is reminded of the U.S. Army captain in the 1860s who presented the Apaches with blankets contaminated by smallpox (158). Tayo's memory of those whites who initially appeared to bestow their favour on the Apaches but instead led them into disaster sparks a crucial change in his understanding. Old Betonie allows Tayo to see the world not through an individual (or limited) perspective, but instead through the broader, historical perspective of the Native American tribes. That is the way he handles Tayo's sickness. In an interview, Silko notes that "the stories also serve to help the individual feel constantly a part of the group so that a person will never feel remote" (Seyersted 31). Likewise, under the influence of Betonie's storytelling, Tayo does comprehend that the loss he has felt is not unique to him. It is the same loss felt by many other Native Americans and mixed-bloods. This awakening leads to his own personal spiritual consolation and healing.

Betonie here perhaps reminds the reader of a psychoanalyst since both Betonie and a psychoanalyst cure their patients through dialogue and storytelling. Betonie helps Tayo to be reborn into someone who values history by helping him transform his unconscious return of a repressed—painful, compulsory repetition—into his conscious return of the repressed. He empowers Tayo to recognize the repressed within the broader ethnic and historical context of the Native Americans. According to Jacques Lacan, recollection, as it pertains to psychoanalysis, allows the analysand to descry one's master signifier—a stabilizing signifier that puts an end to the incessant sliding of other signifiers when representing the subject—in the subject's own true speech and then comprehend history with respect to one's future (Evans 162).⁴ Here, the master signifier is represented by the memory trace or the repressed origin that the analysand must call to mind, with the analysand's act of remembering following the modus of storytelling (verbalizing the master signifier).

It is noteworthy that Betonie does not cure Tayo through the habitual duplication of Native American traditions. Unlike the other medicine man, Ku'oosh, Betonie

embraces the flowing tide of time, the ever-changing world. According to Betonie, when whites came to this country, the world began changing day by day. Thus, it does not benefit anyone to remain caught in the past. This concept of clinging to the false memory of the past and being unreceptive to the changing world is typified in Emo, Harley, and Leroy, who, like Tayo, are World War II veterans of the Laguna Pueblo. However, unlike Tayo, they are possessed by a bygone glory, deluding themselves into believing that, during the war, they were truly blessed, welcomed, and desired by white women (42-43). All of them now being alcoholics, whenever they become intoxicated they automatically begin harping on the same string in their past, recounting their wartime sexual exploits. By incessantly reiterating their false glory and failing to face the changing reality, the men are captivated by the wicked witchery against which Betonie warns Tayo. For Betonie, “things which don’t shift and grow are dead things” (126). In this respect, Betonie suggests that traditional ceremonies should be newly reinterpreted. This reinterpretation is akin to the translation of the original, and here we notice the novel concept of time hidden in Betonie’s mind. From his perspective, the past is not a self-contained, uniform, and petrified entity that lacks any connections to the present. Rather, it is a living thing that continuously intervenes in the present and waits to be reinterpreted and re-created through an act of translation. For this reason, Betonie’s concept of the past can be understood in terms of deferred action.

Obviously, Betonie cherishes Native American traditions. However, he seeks to renew and ingeminate them otherwise in the present. That is how he relates the past to the present. This notion of translating the past reminds the reader of Benjamin’s theory of language. Benjamin refers to deferred action in language translation by arguing that the past can only recover its full meaning through repetition—that is, by translating the original language in the present.

In “On Language as Such and on the Language of Man,” Benjamin formulates such a binary opposition as “the divine infinity of the pure word” versus a finite language (323-24). In his view, the former represents the perfect and pure language of the past, while the latter embodies the degraded present language. Confronted with the challenge of filling the gap that exists between infinite and finite language, Benjamin proposes one solution—the use of translation to elevate the degraded language into a higher form. In his accounts, translation sublimates an imperfect language into a more perfect one: “All higher language is a translation of those lower, until in ultimate clarity the word of God unfolds, which is the unity of this movement made up of language” (332). Herein lies the significance of translation in Benjamin’s philosophy. He further indicates that translation supplies an essential path toward

finding true language: “If there is such a thing as a language of truth, the tensionless and even silent depository of the ultimate truth which all thought strives for, then this language of truth is—the true language. And this very language, whose divination and description is the only perfection a philosopher can hope for, is concealed in [a] concentrated fashion in translations” (“Task” 77).

What is intriguing here is that, as a unique way of recovering the true language, translation is ironically in and of itself a repetition, and an intermediary or secondary step to the origin of the true language. In Benjamin’s words, translation is a “transmission” (“Task” 70) or a “transfer” (75), an act of transforming one language into another. As a result, in Benjamin’s view, translation can be defined as a mode of repeating the past “paradisiac language” (“Language” 326), the origin before the Fall.

This being the case, the mode of repetition in Benjamin’s philosophical speculation on translation throws the very status of the origin into question. Although the translation is generally assumed to be secondary to the original language at the chronological level, in reality, we can observe the uncanny subversion of this familiar concept of linear time. While it can be said that the origin triggers its translation, it can also be argued that the origin becomes discernible only after it is repeated through translation. Without an act of present repetition such as translation, the origin ceases to exist, for it cannot be known. As such, the entire notion of a chronological sequence of time becomes a question for further debate. The linear understanding of time, which posits that the origin is always prior to its repetition, begins to lose its validity. Benjamin’s thought cites deferred action as the mechanism through which the original language is recovered in its retroactive translation in the present or in the future.

Speaking in a Benjaminian fashion, old Betonie does not bestow any exclusive privilege on the original when he translates the original text of Native American traditions. He posits the notion of translation not as a simple imitation but as a re-creation of the original. As he translates, the concept of chronological time collapses, and the past and the present begin to hybridize and coexist with no discernible boundary between them. In his Navajo hogan, old calendars are piled, as “sequences of years confused and lost” (120). These calendars represent non-linear time and Betonie’s philosophy that the past infiltrates the present and vice versa, thus disturbing the notion of precise linear time. Likewise, Marilyn Miller interprets Betonie’s hogan as a place of “temporal syncretism” (163) where the past and the future are mutually interwoven.

Another example of the collapse of linear time can be seen the moment Tayo cuts the barbed-wire fence of the ranch owned by a white to retrieve Josiah’s lost cattle. In this symbolic act of collapsing the boundary, Tayo feels as if “the ticking of the clock” stops and realizes why his old generation wisely mentioned “yesterday and tomorrow

in terms of the present moment” (192). In other words, he recognizes that the past, the present, and the future are no longer mechanically chronological and disparate, but instead closely intertwined, cyclic, and spiral.

As we have seen, the deferred action referred to by Freud and Benjamin is also observed in Tayo’s battle fatigue and Betonie’s way of treating it. It is not only Betonie but also Ts’eh Montañño who helps Tayo overcome his suffering. Lying on the sand, Tayo dreams about his former experience of making love to Ts’eh, right before he sees her a second time (222). His love for Ts’eh, the mountain spirit associated with rain and water, is momentous for him and lets him experience the power of life and creation. Notably, his dreaming of her allows him to experience the fusion of past, present, and future. Louis Owens’s interpretation of *Ceremony* as “a remembering, a putting together of past, present, and future into a coherent fabric of timeless identity” (167) is useful in helping to comprehend Tayo’s dream. On the one hand, the time in which Tayo dreams of Ts’eh is obviously the present. On the other hand, it is the past, for his dream is a memory of his former experience with her. Furthermore, it can be said that it is the future as well, foretelling their upcoming meeting. This mysterious time in his dream—the nodal point that simultaneously interweaves the past, the present, and the future—cannot be appropriately understood from a purely chronological dimension. Involved with this mysterious time, Tayo can cure himself.

This being the case, what is the significance of Tayo and Betonie’s deferred action? From an historical perspective, their deferred action bears a political significance, as it both directly and obliquely undercuts the white American colonial discourse on Native Americans. It paves the way for a new storytelling—an act of translation through repetition and memory that *re*-tells the dominant nineteenth-century view of history.

As the spiritual and magical woman, Ts’eh says to Tayo that, in the whites’ story, the Native Americans are a vanishing people: “They have their stories about us—Indian people who are only [. . .] waiting for the end” (232). The whites’ story mirrors their historical view, which takes after the colonial discourse that was prevalent in nineteenth-century America and survives even today in their unconscious mind. The colonial discourse can be seen as the corollary or the dark side of the linear, progressive concept of time. As Bauerkemper explains it, the Western European progressive and teleological model of history is predicated on the logic of linear narratives. Linear narratives tend to “eradicate elements of the past (and of the present) understood to be unusable and carry forth elements that are deemed useful for the progression into a future that will move us one step closer to the end of history” (33).

In the United States, such a progressive model has existed since the country's formative period. Drawing from the ideas of the Enlightenment, the country aimed to build a rational, civilized nation, thus necessitating the violent extirpation of the country's so-called "savageness." As white Americans became more and more obsessed with their ideal of a civilized nation, they would seek to reach this ideal through the oppression of people of colour, whom the whites considered to be degenerative races standing in the way of achieving their perfect, civilized nation. Native Americans were regarded by the whites as being close to savage nature. Such savages were in need of subjugation in the name of civilized nation-building. *Ceremony* shows that Native American culture was nearly wiped out by white Protestants. Tayo's mother, Laura, even felt ashamed of her Indian way of life due to the education she received at the Indian reservation school, which promoted colonial discourses (68). We see, therefore, how the notions of linear time and colonial discourse become intertwined.

During the formative period, Thomas Jefferson believed that Native Americans "only want[ed] cultivation" (147), a belief steeped in the ideas of the Enlightenment. His underlying assumption of linear, progressive history, as revealed by his belief in the Indians' need to be uplifted, is characterized by cultural expansionism and colonialism because, in Jefferson's view, the Native Americans could advance solely through their unilateral assimilation into the white culture. On the other hand, in *Letters from an American Farmer*, J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur maintained that Native Americans could by no means be civilized through their conversion to Christianity and that any attempt to civilize them was doomed to failure (78). Although Jefferson and de Crèvecoeur appear to take quite different positions, their viewpoints are actually two sides of the same coin. Both assume that nothing is more desirable than progress, so their seemingly disparate arguments over the progression/degeneration of the Indians reflect the same colonialist discourses, basing their views on the notion of linear time. De Crèvecoeur's assertion, in particular, of Native Americans' inescapable deterioration adumbrates the prevailing nineteenth-century concept of Native Americans as the "Vanishing People." Through this colonial discourse, whites built and strengthened their ethnocentric and narcissistic misbelief in Manifest Destiny and accepted the notion of the Vanishing People as conventional wisdom. In fact, many literary works published in the nineteenth century can be read as mere repetitions or slight variations of de Crèvecoeur's thought.

Silko looks on the widespread colonial idea of Indians' vanishing as a lie nourished by the notion of linear, chronological time. According to Paul Beekman Taylor, the repetition of songs, stories, and recollected images in *Ceremony* threatens the Western European sense of temporal progress, while Tayo's fragmentary memory

dissolves the established sense of time (228). Through Tayo and Betonie's return of the repressed, Silko forcefully delivers her message that Native Americans are not vanishing at all but are very much still alive and will persist in the days to come. Herein lies the political significance of her storytelling.

Finally, we raise a question that is last but by no means least: in Silko's *Ceremony*, what is the master signifier of the memory trace (in Lacan's sense) that the subject is summoned to recall? It is a question of what to recollect. Tayo, a mixed-blood, failed to recover from his illness despite Ku'oosh's treatment because the medicine man adhered to traditional ceremony, optimized for the treatment of full-blooded Indians. Seeking a true cure, Tayo visits Gallup to meet with another medicine man, Betonie—a mixed-blood Navajo. Gallup represents the hybrid space or the place of "in-between" where mixed-bloods, Afro-Americans, Mexicans, Native Americans, and whites all live together. Tayo had lived there until he was four when his mother abandoned him as an unwelcome mixed-blood son. Returning to Gallup, he is retroactively reminded of the time he observed the shocking scene of a newborn being buried by the baby's mother (111). This recollected scene is akin to the primal scene in Freud's analysis of the Wolf Man. The repressed in Tayo's return of the repressed (or his return to the origin) is embodied in the hybridity of the abandoned mixed-blood baby who represents an abject discharge, inextricably linked to Tayo's rejection by both the white and the Indian communities. According to Chadwick Allen, the mixed-bloods, being despised by both communities, have "a sense of belonging nowhere and to no one" (98).

In Betonie's hogan, discarded old calendars as abject as the abandoned baby are stacked at random, lacking any temporal order. These "leftover things" (127) represent the mutually intertwined, hybridized time rejected by colonialist discourses committed to the dominance of chronological time. However, Betonie appreciates these items because he believes that "all these things have stories alive in them" (121). If time is understood in terms of nonlinearity, as Betonie's statements imply, the stories of Native American heritage must be continually retold and re-created—as a mode of repetition and translation—through the reciprocal action that takes place between the past and the present. These "stories," in Betonie's words, can be likened to stories told in *Ceremony* by the narrator, "Thought-Woman, the spider" (1), and Silko: the story of the spider woman who delivers people from the drought by helping the Sun Man defeat the wicked magician Ck'o'yo (170-76), or the story about a hummingbird and a big green fly that both rescue people from the drought.⁵ According to Alan R. Velie, the Laguna myths that are scattered throughout *Ceremony* "give Tayo's story an

added dimension—a timelessness, or a sense that the action has happened before and will happen again” (107). While blurring the boundaries between past, present, and future, these traditional stories told by the tribal grandmothers share the themes of boundarylessness and hybridity. Within these stories, there are no exclusive boundaries, but rather a mutual communication and sympathy between people and animals (or nature). This boundarylessness and hybridity lend the stories a curative power, as demonstrated by Tayo’s recovery.

The ritualistic ceremony brings the same effect by allowing Tayo to experience boundarylessness firsthand. Climbing the Chuska Mountains with Betonie as a part of the ceremony, Tayo looks down at the scenery and experiences nature without any boundaries like highways and fences; this experience regenerates his power (139). According to Robert M. Nelson, ceremony plays a reintegrating role that permits Tayo to identify and recover his intimate relationship with the land (308). In “The Psychological Landscape of *Ceremony*,” the Laguna poet and critic Paula Gunn Allen states that “through the stories, the *Ceremony*, the gap between isolate human and lonely landscape is closed” (8). She also notes the immense female powers that invigorate Tayo. In her view, both Night Swan, the old Mexican dancer, and Ts’eh cure Tayo, helping him recover his proper and intimate relationship with the land (*Sacred* 120-22). Similarly, regarding their role, Miller says, “the healing power of the land is female as well. In the south, Tayo meets Night Swan, who was ‘like the rain and the wind; age had no relation to her’ [. . .], and in the north, he encounters Ts’eh. Sexual union with both these characters represents union with the land and its inhabitants” (174). In this way, Tayo becomes aware that “there were no boundaries” (*Ceremony* 145), allowing him to resume his lost intimacy with nature.

The significance of story and ceremony, as both relate to boundarylessness and hybridity, rests in another one of Tayo’s acts—the cutting of the barbed-wire fence. In the final part of *Ceremony*, after finally discovering Josiah’s lost cattle on a white’s ranch, Tayo cuts the “barbed-wire fence”—a symbol of forced, violent boundary-making—to set the speckled cows free. Tayo remembers Betonie’s advice: “The deeds and papers don’t mean anything. It is the people who belong to the mountain” (128). Through his historical awakening of a repressed origin, the world with no boundaries, Tayo fights against the whites’ encroachment of the Natives’ land and their enforced boundary-making through this political act of cutting the fence. By this determined act, Tayo also affirms hybridity. The spotted cattle themselves are mixtures, bearing both Mexican brands and the Laguna Pueblo Auntie’s brands. As such, Tayo’s act of rescuing the cattle indicates a desired blurring of racial and ethnic boundaries.⁶ In Susan Blumenthal’s view, the cattle represent hybrids as “a cross between domesticated

cattle and wild animals” (369). She also interprets the cattle as a metaphor for Native Americans simultaneously accommodating a white culture while maintaining their own native traditions. As we have seen, in Silko’s storytelling, boundarylessness and hybridity become long-ignored repressed origins present in people’s (un-)conscious minds, origins that must be returned to so as to be healed. Tayo’s psychic wounds are cured the moment he becomes fully aware of the repressed in both individual and historical contexts. At the end of *Ceremony*, the snow begins to fall, bringing an end to the drought (a metaphor for death or sickness) that has served as a negative motif throughout the text. This indicates that the world, as well as Tayo, will now begin the process of healing from its prolonged period of suffering.

On the whole, in *Ceremony*, through her caring portrayal of the historically neglected Native Americans and mixed-bloods (“in-between”), Silko allows the repressed people to hope for their survival and regeneration. Paradoxically, she envisions healing and salvation in the hero’s suffering. The wise medicine man Betonie, standing in for Silko in the story, is imbued with an idiosyncratic sense of time and history that defies the Western European concept of chronological time. His teaching of time and history—similar to Freud’s “deferred action” and Benjamin’s “translation”—enables Tayo to unravel himself from his personal troubles and allows him to affirm the repressed (boundarylessness and hybridity).

Finally, at the Pueblo’s *kiva*, Tayo tells the Laguna elders the story of his long journey to find his cure. The story provides the Laguna community with a regenerative vision that undermines the pernicious notion of Native Americans as a vanishing people predicated on the concept of chronological and teleological time. Similarly, through her storytelling of *Ceremony*, Silko presents a vision for all the people of the world, irrespective of their blood and skin colour, about the urgent issue of how to prosper together without internecine violence. Conclusively, Silko’s *Ceremony* is both a politically subversive storytelling regarding (hi-)story as told by nineteenth-century white Americans and a curative storytelling about the history of the repressed Other (boundarylessness, hybridity). Her storytelling still awaits our ongoing retroactive repetition—remembrance, re-creation, and re-enactment—of the Native American spirits and experiences portrayed in *Ceremony* in order to empower us to understand them and be healed.

NOTES

1/ For a detailed study of the close relationship between the circularity of place and Tayo’s spiritual healing in *Ceremony*, see Edith Swan’s “Healing via the Sunwise Cycle in Silko’s *Ceremony*.” Swan identifies here how a four-day ceremony for Tayo’s recovery is performed, paying attention to his geographically cyclic

movements. Swan summarizes that “Tayo is treated in the west (Gallup), north (Chuska Mountains), east (Mount Taylor), and south (Cañoncito) [. . .]. This is the starry map of the mountains visited by Tayo in his *Ceremony*” (324-25).

2/ The refrain *Y volveré* can be translated into English as “and I will return”; therefore, the repeated words in Tayo’s dream may indicate the theme of “the return of the repressed.”

3/ Freud’s other explanation of deferred action can be found in his case study of Emma in “Project for a Scientific Psychology” (352-56).

4/ For the original, see Lacan (88).

5/ This story is fragmented and scattered throughout the text. For the whole story, see Silko’s *Storyteller* (111-21).

6/ Teuton does not consent to many interpretations arguing for boundarylessness and hybridity in Silko’s *Ceremony*. From his perspective, Tayo’s act of cutting the fence is to collapse the boundary just temporarily. For Teuton, Tayo’s act ultimately affirms the boundary that will protect Natives’ rights in the real hegemony of white Americans’ ascendancy over Native Americans by retrieving the cattle (138). Obviously, we need to hearken to his precaution against the possible apolitical neglect of actually persisting asymmetrical power relationships. However, still his argument cannot safely override Silko’s cosmological idea of boundarylessness—as seen in Tayo’s reintegrating vision of “no boundaries” (145, 246)—and hybridity as the leitmotif of *Ceremony*. Also, we should keep in mind Krupat’s argument that some Native scholars’ nationalistic attitudes can be both denial and emulation of the asymmetrical power relationships and, thereby, may reproduce untowardly similar power relationships. For his criticism against the cultural sovereignty-nationalist scholars, see Krupat (24-29).

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