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Healing the borders: Pueblo medicine and cultural hybrids in Frank Waters' *The Man Who Killed the Deer* and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*

by

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“I’m all fixed, far as I’m concerned, as a medicine man. I’ll have three meals a day, five if I want ‘em, roof over my head and a drink every now and then to warm me up. I’ll be worshipped and fed, and treated like a high priest for telling people things they want to hear. Good medicine men are born, not made. Come to see me some time, my boy. Even you’ll take off your hat when you see how respected I am. Why, only the day before yesterday they wanted to make me their legislature. Their whole legislature. I don’t know what that means, but it must be the highest honor they can bestow. Yeah, I’m fixed for the rest of my natural life.”

--John Huston, *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*

“*Depswa*...medicine man. It’s me...I gave Alka Seltzer to a kid with a stomach ache...cured him with one belch, but it was the ‘plop-plop, fizz-fizz’ that really dazzled them. The medicine man was understandably pissed off. I had taken his ‘stick’...his self-respect, his place. He just took off. My intentions were well meant.”

--John McTiernan, *Medicine Man*

“Finally, there was this: something had always bothered Mammedaty...He had always wanted to know how it is that the mound of earth which a mole makes around the opening of its burrow is so fine. It is nearly as fine as powder, and it seems almost to have been sifted. One day Mammedaty was sitting quietly when a mole came out of the earth. Its cheeks were puffed out as if it had been a squirrel packing nuts. It looked all around for a moment, then blew the fine dark earth out of its mouth. And this it did again and again, until there was a ring of black, powdery earth on the ground. That was a strange and meaningful thing to see. It meant Mammedaty had gotten possession of a powerful medicine.”

--N. Scott Momaday, *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (73)

Introduction: “Joining the Tribe”

In each of the three epigraphs above, we see a different view of medicine. The first, from John Huston’s classic, *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, is spoken by his father, Walter Huston, in a role for which he won an Academy Award. Huston’s Howard is a prospector, handyman, journeyman, and bricoleur. He saves the life of a native child using liquor, frontier gumption, and “a few Boy Scout tricks,” and is then invited to join the tribe. This joining act has been a common fixture in Hollywood encounters with native peoples. It indicates a desire for a dream-like return to nature, freedom from care and responsibility, a search for lost youth and innocence. The subject of lust is the Edenic “tribe,” a temporally static place, where civilization has failed to corrupt morality and survival is the only measurement of success. It is a place where white men could find peace with nothing more than common sense survival skills, but by using the knowledge they acquired from their education and technology, they were able to fill a much more important role: the medicine man, a leadership role often second only to the chief. (This is an example of colonialism writ small: one white man subjugating one small village. Repeated over and over, it results in an imperialist’s dream of white dominance.) Howard has finally found an escape from his own greed and destitution by joining the tribe. Thus, he becomes a cultural hybrid, straddling the line between “white” and “Indian.”

The film’s depiction of natives is as a quaint group that could never pose a threat to white supremacy due to its primitive understanding of the world. Another discrete party in the film are the *bandidos*, a group of *mestizos* who are so greedy and violent that

they covet guns more than gold. They are introduced to the viewer during an unprovoked attack on a passenger train, as they shout and ride alongside, shooting into the windows at passengers. Their impotent attack on the train suggests a futile resistance against civilization and technology. The *bandidos* have no hope of gaining any riches with these attacks; their only objective must be stubborn, savage murder. The *bandidos* have no regard for authority (“We don’t need no badges! I don’t have to show you any stinking badges!”) and no respect for life. They are *mestizo*, half colonized, prepared to enjoy the benefits of civilization without following any of its rules. They are not as quaint as the natives, but they retain some of their primitive savagery and stupidity. They are wild and violent, and dangerous because they know of weapons and warfare.

The *bandido* attack on the train marks for the protagonists a border crossing, a journey into land “where you can be positive that no surveyor or anybody knows anything about prospecting [read: white person] has ever been there before.” This is the Wild, and here, white man’s technology, the pistol, the shovel, the mule, all help him tame the land and reap its gifts. The “treasure” of the film’s title is unlike other Hollywood treasures: not coins buried in a chest but gold dust to be painstakingly mined. It isn’t found. It is worked for; it is earned. The three prospectors chip away at the inside of the mountain with picks and shovels. As the gold is slowly brought out to the light of day, as the treasure is building up bit by bit, the film probes the madness created by greed and isolation.

Humphrey Bogart’s character, Fred C. Dobbs, begins as a generous, loyal friend and slowly descends into madness and murder. Howard tries and is unable to cure Dobbs of his sickness, and eventually Dobbs tries to kill his best friend Curtin in a fit of rage and

greed. Dobbs then is murdered by the *bandidos*, who unwittingly scatter the treasure to the wind. The realization that their hard work has been in vain causes a fit of hysteria that cures the greed in Curtin and Howard. Curtin returns to society a changed man, spiritually centered. Howard defects and joins the tribe as medicine man.

Let us examine the word “medicine” as used in this sense. Thelma Charen gives an excellent analysis of the history of the word from its origins through its usages in the 1950’s. However, the word has undergone further redefinition in the past several years. It has come to include such once metaphysical concepts as psychological, chiropractic, osteopathic, homeopathic, and so-called “naturopathic” medicines, as well as further expansion into the realm of spirituality. The result of these “intrusions” has been a circling of wagons of sorts by the “mainstream” medical community, which has striven to restore the definition of their practice, to limit the term to the kinds of medicine of their choice. By attaching such condescending epithets as “alternative,” “holistic,” or “tribal,” to certain forms of medicine, one denies the authenticity of the medicine in question. It no longer fits within the realm of “real” medicine¹.

Nonetheless, the definition has changed across time and culture. According to Charen, its original Indo-European root, MED, means to think, to judge, and is also the root of such terms as meditate and its derivatives. In contemporary Euro-American thought, it is a broad term including such wide-ranging aspects as sanity, health, prevention, cures, treatments, therapy, doctors, hospitals, surgeons, nurses, orderlies and

¹ In certain cases this protective linguistic custody is not a bad thing. Any profession would reject methods that are unacceptable standards of practice. Even though many methods once thought obsolete, such as bleeding or application of leeches, are experiencing a resurgence in Western medicine, there are still certain practices that are considered archaic. For example, no doctor would permit such practices as surgery without proper sterilization or an invasive procedure without cause. However, the medical community has, for good or ill, maintained a hegemonic control over the word “medicine.”

candy-stripers, insurance companies, drugs, psychiatrists, chiropractors, and so on. As the word has evolved, it has come to be used in different ways. In *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, Howard's "medicine" is a placeholder for imperial dominance. He laughs as he tells Curtin of his plan to con the natives into providing him a life of ease while he "tells them things they want to hear." Medicine isn't the only thing that is portrayed in a primitive light in this film.

Likewise, Mexican justice is portrayed as savage, summarily rendered, and unquestionable. There are no such things as due process, habeas corpus, or separation of powers. The *federales* are judge, jury, and executioner, and are little better than the *bandidos*. They too are *mestizo*, and their fragmented ethnicity is reflected by a conflicted commitment to justice and order. The European half wishes to spread civilization into the wild areas, yet the Indian half wishes to show strength and pride. The *federales* have a problem with identity. Each half of their culture wants them to abandon the other, and as a result, they are abandoned by both. They are what many cultural critics have called crossbreeds, people caught between two cultures.

Their crisis, as Louis Owens has declared in *Mixedblood Messages*, is one of identity. Who are we? Where do we come from? What is our connection to the land and our neighbors? Where do we fit within the larger world? These questions were historically answered in all cultures with a complex system of oral histories, ceremonies, and mythologies, passed directly from one generation to the next. However, with the arrival of Europeans (who had no connection to the land and had a history that many colonists were fleeing) and the policy of Indian Removal, many of these connections and chains of stories were broken, and many parts of the culture were lost forever. A Kiowa

story, for example, could refer to Rainy Mountain, a specific place that was often within sight. Now, for writers such as N. Scott Momaday, that place is a vague notion, thousands of miles away from where his family resettled. The breaking of this connection with the land has also caused a schism in Kiowa identity. Without Rainy Mountain to serve as a holy place, a frame of reference, a center from which all other things are measured, Momaday says, the culture is left with an empty place (4).

This identity crisis is common among Euro-Americans as well. We see this in many prominent modernist works by white authors. Hemingway's Jake Barnes, Fitzgerald's Nick Carraway, Faulkner's Quentin Compson, and Wharton's Lily Bart all share that characteristic, what Owens describes as "alienated heroes...searching for truth in a Godless world" (62). One could argue that this alienation is the central drive of modernism. Whereas previous heroes had tangible antagonists to defeat, sometime in the mid to late nineteenth century, right around the time when Nietzsche asked "Could it be possible...that God is *dead*?" (Nietzsche 478), a transformation began. With the "death" of God and the rise of science and industry, the hero faces a much more difficult struggle: the struggle for meaning. With the deconstruction of the God-Man-Earth-Satan hierarchy, European Man must find his own place. Owens argues that many postmodern works also contain modern heroes. However, where Hemingway's and Fitzgerald's modern exemplars, Barnes and Carraway, end their struggles with cynicism and tragedy, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past, postmodern heroes reject the God hierarchy altogether and return to a more "native" understanding of identity, that in which Man and Earth live in a symbiotic relationship, where there is no dividing line between nature and civilization, and where time moves not linearly but cyclically, not a

current to beat against, but a wave to ride (Owens 60-1). This deconstruction occurs in medicine as well, as we see in John McTiernan's 1992 film, *Medicine Man*.

Like Walter Huston's Howard, Sean Connery's Dr. Robert Campbell is something of an exile himself, unfit for the fineries of society. He lives a wild, child-like existence in a treehouse in the jungle, both caretaker and colonist of a group of "Indians" from the Amazon. He has studied the people of the Amazon for years, and stumbled on a village where no one ever gets cancer (another Edenic paradise). After six years of study, he believes he has isolated the secret, a rare bromeliad that grows only in that valley. Realizing that he has found a cure for the "plague of the twentieth century," he futilely tries to replicate his results. He discovers the true source of health in the village, the ants the people eat for protein, but not before the Road builders start a forest fire that destroys the valley.

He is a different kind of colonizer than Howard the prospector. Rather than living high on the fruit of the native labor, Campbell works with the natives. He teaches them language and medicine, makes them nurses and scientists, and brings wisdom and civilization. That he is rude and sexist, himself without manners, bears little on the gifts he can bring to this pristine culture as he attempts to preserve it from white influence, depersonified in this film as "The Road." The road draws ever nearer, and with it the horrors of smallpox, influenza, foot-and-mouth disease, and other dangers. 9,000,000 aboriginal peoples once lived in the Amazon, Dr. Campbell points out, but after European diseases came through, the number was reduced to 200,000. Campbell himself once inadvertently infected an Indian village with swine flu, a mild contagion by our standards, but one that proved devastating to the unprepared Indians.

Neither Campbell's sympathetic nature, nor his well-meant intentions, prevents him from stealing the place of the old medicine man. Even though in the end Campbell reconciles with the old medicine man, and they resume the search for the ants together, Campbell still holds his culture (and science) above the natives'. Campbell holds a place of honor and respect in the village, but he doesn't respect the Indian medicine man's definition of medicine, or "juju," dismissing it as witchcraft or pseudo-religious hocus pocus. For Campbell, medicine is one of many "gifts" to be given to the inferior culture. Medicine is something of a "white man's burden" for Campbell, a secret he shares with the native savages.

Another of these gifts is feminism. The film presents an interesting feminist reading. Dr. Rae Crane, who has been assigned to assess Dr. Campbell's research to see if his funding should be continued, is a modern, "nineties woman" who has a lengthy resume to her credit. Campbell, like the Indians, is sexist. He dismisses her as "girl" and initially refuses to work with her. He tells the tribe that "Dr. Bronx" is a virgin, because that is the only way they can understand her presence in the village and the fact that she sleeps alone. For the film, gender equality is another of the ways Western culture sets itself above the Indians. It is a gift that Crane intends to bring to the Indians (and Campbell). Yet despite her civilized exterior, Dr. Crane too begins to go wild almost upon arrival in the village, as her modesty disappears and she undresses in front of Campbell. As Crane becomes more indigenous and Campbell becomes more civilized, both begin to have a crisis of identity.

These crises, from whites going native and natives going white, spring from the pre-Derridean idea of race, an idea that Europeans invented and gave to Americans and

Africans, an idea of race as a clear-cut, objective reality derived from blood quanta. The concept that there was such a thing as “black blood” or “white blood” is partially, I believe, a reaction to, and a justification of, the problematics of slavery and colonization. If we, as colonists, can claim that there is a certain essential difference, or perhaps *differànce*, between the races, an essential element in the biology of the races, then we can of course argue that *our* race is superior (we have many examples to prove that we are more advanced: technology, religion, gender equality, democracy, etc.) and *theirs* inferior, and we have a justification for taking their land and labor and supplanting their culture with our own. Of course, post-structuralism tells us, through the works of Derrida, Vizenor, Henry Louis Gates, and others, that “race” is an idea, made up by dominant whites. It tells us that in fact, there is no *real*, objective difference, that the only difference is subjective opinion. It, along with biology and genetics, tells us that there is no *differànce* in our blood or our minds, that the only difference is cultural. If we can stop seeing race as an either/or dichotomy, rather if we can view it as a continuum, then we are prepared to understand the notion of *cultural hybridity*. If we can accept that there is no clear-cut border between Indianness and Whiteness, if we can see the whole spectrum of race as fluid, if we can see the whole world as a mestizo/a consciousness, as Gloria Anzaldúa argues, then we can begin to understand our history and each other.

This brings us to the third epigraph, from N. Scott Momaday’s *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, the story of the old man Mammedaty and the mole. Mammedaty has yet another view of medicine, not as an instrument of power to use for one’s own advantage, or as a gift to be given from the learned to the simple, but rather as an understanding of the world as a whole. This view, the American Indian view, is perhaps the one that is

closest to the Indo-European root MED, to know, to understand. Once Mammedaty understands how the mole makes dust so fine, he then understands a little more about the Earth. He has uncovered one of the Earth's powerful secrets, and has come into possession of medicine. How he can apply his new knowledge to agriculture or the taxonomy of rodents is up to him. This knowledge may give him the power to heal old methods of farming, to improve pest control, or to further his understanding of the complexities of geology. His connection to the natural ways of things is a little stronger than it was when he didn't possess such medicine.

Thus we see an American Indian definition of medicine that is far different from anything Europeans have thought. In the following chapters, we will explore this concept of "native medicine" and how its various definitions and implications present themselves in two major works of Pueblo Indian literature. First, we will look at sickness as presented in Frank Waters' *The Man Who Killed the Deer*, a pre-postmodern novel written by a white author. Next, we will examine a cure in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*, a postmodern work by an American Indian author. These two works are remarkable in their similarities (each is set in a New Mexico pueblo; each involves a modernist hero who is mentally ill and divided from his community by a number of mechanisms) and equally remarkable in their differences (one has an author who identifies as white, one who identifies as American Indian; one is written from the perspective of an outsider looking in, one was criticized for revealing too much about sensitive cultural rituals). Finally, we will examine recovery through the lenses of a number of critical works. I will show how cultural hybrids use medicine in these works to improve their knowledge of the Earth and its people, and how they heal themselves

and strengthen their bonds with their communities. We will explore their connections with race, we will investigate the dividing line between “Indian” and “White,” and we will see how culture affects our definitions of medicine and healing.

Chapter One: Frank Waters and the Disease without Cure

In 1922, the United States Forest Service shifted its primary emphasis from protection and preservation to management and maintenance, opening land to “multiple use” by ranchers, mining and logging companies, and recreationists. The new goal was the “ethical” extraction of the National Forests’ resources. The Multiple Use policy created a number of local conflicts, mostly between ranchers who sought to use the land for grazing rights, and mining and logging interests who wanted to extract the raw materials of the land using the most “ethical” means possible, including clear-cuts and strip mines. The reaction from many conservationist groups and indigenous peoples was immediate and angry. The policy shift initiated the birth of the modern environmentalist movement, and the symbolic front lines of the battle between conservationists and the USFS were found in a then little known pueblo situated in the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains in northern New Mexico.

When, in 1906, Theodore Roosevelt signed an order designating 1,500,000 acres in northern New Mexico as Carson National Forest, ostensibly for protection from overuse, at first, the Taos Pueblo saw little change in their lifestyle. They had control of the lands surrounding the Pueblo and still maintained the privacy of their ceremonies and had relatively little interference from private or public entities. But with the 1922 policy shift, a 48,000-acre chunk of land that included Blue Lake, a sacred site central to the cultural and religious rites of the Taos, was opened for grazing and logging, and a decades-long, contentious legal battle was begun that would both reflect and affect the United States’ policy regarding American Indians.

The Taos pueblo is no stranger to tales of war and invasion. In addition to a complex oral history that is protected from outsiders, their post-conquest history includes raids by Apache and Navajo warriors, invasions by Spanish, Texan, and American conquerors, and more recently, battles with disease, poverty, and marginalization. In the late-twentieth century, the pueblo experienced another major invasion: the nearby city of Taos became an attractive destination for many tourists, artists, and academics. Despite all of these changes, according to their own history, the “most significant event” in the last century of the pueblo was the 64-year battle for Blue Lake (Gordon-McCutchan 12).

The theft of Blue Lake caused a profound rift in Taos culture. Their greatest church had been taken, and the sanctity of their annual August ceremony was violated. A sickness spread through the people, a bitter angry divide. Many Taos began to turn to peyotism as a means of filling the new religious void. Cynicism and resentment started to grow. Of all the invasions and violations the people had experienced in the past, this was the greatest. They watched helplessly as farmers, ranchers, miners, and loggers began to “share” their mountains and lakes. There were isolated acts of violence on both sides of the conflict. Numerous court delays, decisions and reversals dragged the case on for years (Gordon-McCutchan). Bitterness and anger grew among the Taos. The culture was sick.

This sickness is evident in Frank Waters’ *The Man Who Killed the Deer*. We see a Taos people that are divided on many issues. Underlying the plot of the novel is the battle for Dawn (Blue) Lake. The hero, Martiniano, unwittingly sets in motion a chain of events that reignite the battle for the Taos elders when he poaches (kills) a deer on Federal (Taos) land. The elders are angry with Martiniano for damaging the relations

between the Taos and the governor. They point to totem gifts, two ceremonial canes given to them by President Lincoln, and speak of peace with the whites. But a growing group of Taos direct their resentment to the whites, who have taken their Dawn Lake and given them a string of promises to return it.

The sickness is present in Martiniano as well. He is spiritually ill. The killing of the deer without proper respect and ceremony, without dripping drops of its blood on the ground and sprinkling cornmeal on the deer's head, has exacerbated the illness, but it was there before. It was a part of the sickness of the community. The deer comes to be a trope for his sickness in the narrative. It appears to him four times in the novel, at each point a reminder of his unease. Each occurrence of the deer is followed by a realization on Martiniano's part that his path to healing is incomplete or otherwise inadequate. But before we examine his path to healing, we must first examine his illness.

When Martiniano kills the deer, he does so (at least partially) out of spite. He is resentful of the community, the Pueblo and the "white man's Government" of the nearby town of La Oreja, for denying him what he believes he is entitled to. His relationship with his community has deteriorated, beginning with his being chosen to attend the white school instead of participating in the kiva ritual. Upon his return from school, he is chastised for not wearing the traditional dress of the Pueblo. He becomes resentful of being alienated, which in turn causes him to be further alienated. Ultimately, he is denied his turn at the community thresher, which causes him to miss hunting season. From his point of view, he and his wife are entitled to a deer, even though the Forest Service considers it poaching. He is fined by the government and punished by the elders.

The pressure that the elders exert on him is much like the pressure being exerted on them by the Anglos around them. They too are being asked to conform to a set of structures many of them do not wish to follow. Their community is divided between those who wish to adhere to their traditional values and those who wish to enjoy the benefits of life in white culture. This rift is further widened when Martiniano kills a deer.

From the point of view of the Taos elders, Martiniano is a constant source of trouble. His whole life he has challenged their long-held beliefs. He has not paid proper respect to their authority. He has brought the attention of the Law to their pueblo. He refuses to follow their rules. But part of their dislike of Martiniano is caused by the illness in their own society. Many of the elders resent his white education and see him as a threat to the purity of their culture, while others feel a renewed sense of resentment towards the white government for intruding on their privacy. “This Martiniano had killed a deer. He had been duly punished. But his action had been like a stone impacting the surface of a lake whose widening ripples eddied swiftly into the darkest corners of the shore” (149). The elders see Martiniano’s continued defiance as a threat to the status quo of the village. Still others like Palemon see that threat as an opportunity for the community to regain a sense of pride it had lost after decades of encroachment by whites and Mexicans. The forces in the community pull Martiniano in different directions, and his alienation grows.

E. Kathy Saugee suggests that at each stage of his descent, Martiniano encounters the ghost of the five-pointed buck he killed. At each encounter, Martiniano has what Saugee calls “migrations to his internal center” (16). Saugee compares Martiniano’s path to healing to the spiritual Path of Life of the Hopi, as outlined in Waters’ *Book of the*

Hopi. In this journey, the traveler must pass through each of the four worlds below before returning to the physical world. While the Hopi religion is discrete, it does share many traits with both Tewa and Tiwa religions, the latter of which the Taos pueblo are a part.

Alexander Blackburn also sees Martiniano's recovery as a journey of faith. In "The Man Who Never Stops Living," he describes a journey through the "gates to the sacred, [taken] not by storm but by gentle surrender" (118). As Martiniano travels to the bottom of the four spirit worlds and returns to the physical, he must pass through these gates. At first he attempts to do so by force, which is partially effective on the way down. To work his way up, however, he will need to learn gentle surrender.

The first encounter with the deer is the night he kills it. The act of defiance against the "white man's Government" represents a break in Martiniano's psyche. It occurs just before the present action of the novel, but we learn through flashbacks Martiniano's discontent with his tribe, in fact of a feeling of alienation and disillusionment. After being unjustly fined and whipped by the town elders, Martiniano complains to the District Indian Superintendent, Strophy.

"Go to my pueblo, my people, and punish them for the wrongs they have committed upon me...Or else let you go there and explain that it is your will I do as you taught, as you taught me for six years against my will...You grab us boys out of our houses and send us away to school and teach us all this nonsense, all these lies about becoming good citizens, about being like white men. And then you kick us out, and send us back home, and tell us, 'Now be good Indians again!'" (49)

We see in Martiniano's language anger towards both his Indian community and the outside world that has corrupted him. He also feels a sense of entitlement, that he is owed something by both the Indians and whites. He feels obviously rejected by the white community, and also rejected by his own people. When he is newly married to Flowers Playing, he remarks to her, "Like me, you are not Indian" in the eyes of his Pueblo (60). In his lack of Indian-ness, Martiniano refuses to dress in the traditional dress of his people, he abstains from ceremonial dances and traditions, and he fails to pay proper respect to the community elders.

The events leading up to the killing of the deer, just prior to the present action in the novel, portray Martiniano's identity crisis. He is lost in both worlds, having been tainted by the white school and his mixed-blood heritage. The act of killing the deer, however, is an act of defiance for him, and the first step in reclaiming his identity. It is an Indian act. By killing the deer out of season, he is declaring his own and his community's independence from white rule. It is a demonstrable moment of cultural awareness. By failing to point the deer's head east for Father Sun or drop its blood for Mother Earth, he has incurred a spiritual debt. But that he is aware of these debts shows the beginnings of his reclamation of his Indian identity.

In trying to understand why the deer's spirit has so much power over him, he begins to explore his spirituality in the Native American Church, or as the novel refers to it, the Peyote Road. It is here that he has the next encounter with the five-pointed buck. It appears to him on the way to a meeting one night, and he returns home (104-6). That night, the meeting was raided by the Pueblo government and all those in attendance were

fined. Martiniano knows the deer appeared to him to warn him that the Peyote Road was not the right path to healing.

Martiniano's use of the entheogen peyote reflects his desire to escape reality. Peyote's active chemical, mescaline, affects the brain by causing a release of hormones that create a feeling of euphoria and physical energy in low doses, to more potent hallucinations in larger doses (Erowid). Peyote has a long history with several American Indian religious practices in the southwestern tribes. One of the most basic (and most common among Hollywood Indians) is the Vision Quest, in which the participant, usually a young male, goes into the wild for a period of days, fasting and consuming peyote tea until a spiritual vision guides him to his purpose in life. Such a vision was Martiniano searching for, but not finding, on the Peyote Road. Rather, he began to suspect a decadent urge to use the drug as an escape tool. This dual nature of peyotism is noted by Vine Deloria:

In *The Man Who Killed the Deer*, the elders are in council discussing the use of peyote. "But this peyote. It too creates a faith. That is good, that which creates a faith." The theological basis of decision-making elevates the question to the sublime but it has the slight flaw of exclusiveness, which in turn affects its applicability to the Pueblo...What we really face in this dilemma is the all-encompassing recognition that human beings, individually and communally, travel through many worlds and remain responsible to life as we find it. (166)

Martiniano recognizes some of the inherent problems of peyotism, but sees it ultimately as a viable path for some, but not himself. His suspicions return to him when he notices

Panchilo, the town drunk, asleep in the road at night. “Poor, drunken, childless, friendless—famous Panchilo. Was this the end of that beautiful, entrancing road, the Peyote Road?” (104).

His next attempt to cure his spiritual debt is through labor. He works extra acres to repay the trader Byers. He tills untilled land, irrigates and harrows new fields, and works harder than he has ever worked in his life. But labor alone will not set Martiniano on the right path. In working from dawn to dusk, he has abandoned his pregnant wife and neglected his relationship with her. So the spirit of the deer returns to him again. He sees it one morning in his corral with two does, ravaging his crop. He aims his rifle at it, but does not shoot (182-3). He realizes that the deer spirit is trying to show him the way again.

At the town’s fiesta of San Geronimo, Martiniano encounters the buck for the final time. It has been killed again and now sits tied to the top of a pine pole. The young men of the town take turns trying to climb the smooth pine pole and lower the deer for the people to eat. Each fails, and Martiniano takes his turn. Though he gets higher than any others, he still fails. Despite this, it is here, as Saugee argues, that Martiniano makes his turn from the lowest of the four worlds to head back to the physical world above. As he climbs the pole, he feels an increasing weight pushing him back down. He realizes that no matter how hard he pushes, he will be pushed back unless he settles his spiritual debt with the deer. “The deer he had killed had defeated him again—for the last time. For he knew now there was something about it not to be overcome, not to be escaped from; but which must be lived with and understood” (196). He must bond with the deer, and because, as Saugee argues, it is his spirit animal, it will guide him to the physical world.

Flowers Playing represents the human incarnate of the deer. When he first sees her in the flashback, he describes her as “a tall, slim young woman with the great brown eyes and gentleness of a deer” (52). She also evokes Corn Mother through her connection to corn: “Martiniano watched his wife munching corn...she held up in her fingers a piece of venison dripping fat. ‘Catch these on your corn...There is nothing better’” (42-3). Her decadence, and implied cannibalism in eating the venison, suggests that she has spiritual power over the deer. When the two does return after the second death of the five-pointed buck, Flowers Playing reveals she has established a bond with them and herds them safely into the corral (198-200). This taming of the deer is a recuperative act that sends Martiniano on his way to the upper world.

After repaying Byers, he slowly begins to understand the importance of the old town’s customs and ceremonies. He comes to question his belief that “It was the substance of life, not the form” (37, 59). He realizes that by adhering to certain forms, certain customs, he is connected to his community’s past and present. The traditions of the Taos, like all other communities, are what bind them together and give them common experience. He begins to dance in the dances and dress in the traditional style.

The dénouement of his story comes when he feels a calling from the mountains, similar to the one Palemon felt at the novel’s opening. He goes into the mountains and finds Palemon’s son, Napaita, also wounded at the head. By saving Palemon’s son, Martiniano is able to repay him and the novel comes full circle. By returning to the beginning, Martiniano has a symbolic opportunity to atone for his error and repay his spiritual debt.

The mountain where Martiniano kills the deer and rescues Napaita is symbolic of a border crossing. As Michael Loudon has argued, mountains are a recurring symbol in all of Waters' work. They stand as a symbol not just between humanity and nature, but also "between humanity and mystery, between what we know of ourselves and what we have yet to discover" (2). This borderland is a gap between the physical world and the spirit worlds. It is here he begins his journey into spiritual discovery, and here where he ends it. After rescuing Napaita, Martiniano is able to reconcile his spiritual debt. The Taos people, on the other hand, still have many problems to resolve.

The community suffers illness along with Martiniano. In addition to the trouble he causes for them by bringing the attention of the white government, someone inside the pueblo leaks sensitive information about their August ritual at Dawn Lake. The pamphlet, which alleges sexual misconduct at the secret ceremony, most likely corresponds to an actual book written in 1925 by Blanche Grant called *Taos Indians*. John J. Bodine discusses the history of the Taos Blue Lake ceremony and its many false reports. He particularly criticizes Grant's work, and shows that most of her research was incomplete and based on unreliable sources. The pamphlet in the novel is a wound for the Taos, but one that ultimately helps to galvanize their people about the need for and lack of privacy for their sacred rituals.

Likewise, the fact that no one is able to climb the trunk is a major blow. The feast is canceled and the elders realize that the sickness is great. The futile efforts of the boys of the town to climb the pole/phallus suggest sexual impotency and a deeper weakness in the culture. The pine pole ritual is highly sexualized beyond the obvious phallic imagery. It is a reproduction of the gender role of male provision. The young men demonstrate

their prowess and virility by feeding the community for the day. That none are able to complete the task suggests that the Pueblo's youth are not prepared well enough for the difficult tasks of life and the challenges of providing food for their families. The community, like Martiniano, is ill and needs to be healed.

The community takes action in the form of petitioning the government to return their title to Dawn Lake. Their protests get larger and louder. Beginning with Martiniano poaching the deer, the Taos people gradually become more and more discontented with the status quo. They are continually stalled, but they are persistent, and in the end, the government returns the exclusive use of the land surrounding Dawn Lake.

These events, like the pamphlet, have a correlation in history, though the reality was less a victory than that depicted in the novel. According to R.C. Gordon-McCutchan's history *The Taos Indians and the Battle for Blue Lake*, the long legal battle surrounding Blue Lake only began with the 1926 award of compensation. The Pueblo was offered compensation for their lands, which they waived for exclusive rights. They received neither. The Taos' legal struggle became symbolic of the larger struggle of American Indians against the United States Government. It wasn't until 1970, after several decisions were reversed and re-issued, when, with some irony, Richard Nixon permanently returned to the Taos 48,000 acres of land including Blue Lake in what was seen as a victory for conservationists everywhere, as well as a dramatic new precedent in the allocation of land for indigenous peoples (Gordon-McCutchan 215).

There are several characters who qualify as healers in the novel, either for Martiniano or the Taos at large. The first is Palemon, who rescues Martiniano at the

beginning. Manuel Rena, the peyote chief, also helps Martiniano understand his sickness. Flowers Playing serves as a counselor and emotional supporter. Ultimately, Martiniano does the most of anyone to cure himself. Each person in the succession of healers pursues deeper levels of healing. Palemon treats Martiniano's head wound and brings him to the safety of the Pueblo. Rena addresses Martiniano's spiritual lack, and diagnoses him as "sick." Flowers Playing helps him restore his bond with nature through, among other things, the son she gives him. Finally, Martiniano himself restores his connection to his community and history by opening his shell and joining the tribe through the act of rescuing Palemon's son. This is reflective of an underlying philosophy of Indian medicine, which purports that healing is a reflexive act, and can only be truly achieved by the "patient" him- or herself.

These healers are all identified as hybrids. Martiniano and Flowers Playing are both of mixed-blood heritage. Manuel Rena is respected but considered an outsider. Palemon is a generational hybrid, having a connection to the youth of the Taos, as represented by Martiniano, and the elders, evinced by his position in the tribal government. Yet there is another hybrid in the novel who does not qualify as a healer.

The character Rodolfo Byers presents an interesting conundrum. He is gruff and curt, having little in the way of social graces. He seems withdrawn from life, distant and emotionless. Yet this façade is false. While he may not present it, he is caring and compassionate, and sad about what he sees as the inevitable demise of the Indian culture. As Benjamin Lawson and Leslie Feidler have noted, he is Waters' surrogate in the novel (Lawson 184). He sees himself as a neutral observer, living a lonely life of isolation among three cultures, part of all, member of none. He is a hybrid, not in blood quantum

but by choice. He is a master of language, and it is from his knowledge of customs and culture that he derives his power as a culture crosser. Yet he provides no acts of healing for any of the major characters.

He appears to have a certain condescension towards Indian rituals. He frequently describes them as “dancing,” “whooping,” and “mysterious.” All the same, he is trusted by the old men in the tribe. Yet, he remains distant and uninvolved in Indian life, as when he describes “that mysterious medicine made for some boy or other lost up in the mountains” (242). He does not know, does not really care, that it was Martiniano who had made that medicine and saved a young boy’s life.

Waters’ intimate understanding of the Taos culture notwithstanding, there are a number of problems remaining, not the least of which is Waters’ depiction of the culture as “doomed.” Byers voices these concerns most often. He is mournful of the inevitable and ultimate demise of Indian culture as he reacts to the return of Dawn Lake:

Byers saw its falsity. There can be no oases in the desert of ever-shifting time, no idyllic glades of primitive culture in the forest of mankind, no ivory towers of thought. We are all caught in the tide of perpetual change. These pueblos, these reservations must sometime pass away, and the red flow out into the engulfing white. The Government had only postponed the inevitable. His resentment gave way to faint sadness. The victory, even for the Indians, seemed a shabby makeshift. (261)

The idea that “the engulfing white” is an inevitable reality is one that has been challenged by many American Indian scholars, including Louis Owens and Gerald Vizenor. They frame the concept of “vanishing Americans” as a white construct used to justify the

usurpation and extermination of the American Indian. Gerald Vizenor counters this with the idea of survivance, a condition that exists when mere survival itself becomes an act of resistance. Despite all attempts by white culture to portray the American Indian as already dead, they are always already alive (still). Vizenor considers this refusal to disappear indication of the continued renewal of Indian culture.

Owens argues that yet another way the dominant, European culture has tried to subjugate Indians is by presenting their culture as static. By portraying Indians as primitive, by arguing that their culture has stopped evolving, that it is somehow frozen in time, having not changed since 1492, we can view them as essentially *different*, as weak, savage, or inferior. Byers also demonstrates this viewpoint:

Who really knew what this race was? A race that had raised pyramids by ways now unknown to man. Which had evolved a time calendar more accurate than the one now in use, and were tripaning [sic] skulls while the barbarian tribes of Europe were still breaking theirs with stone hammers. A race whose tribes had overspread a continent and developed a civilization whose ancient mysteries still defied the probing of modern minds—and whose pitiful remnants still carried untouched the secret core of their inner life (243).

Here we see a culture that once flourished and thrived (note Byers' suggestion that the medical procedure of trepanning skulls is a sign of cultural achievement), but now dwindles and stagnates. Through Byers, Waters presents a culture with a disease that has no cure. Even though Martiniano embraces his tribal heritage and goes back to practices he had learned to deride in the government school, such as cutting the heels off his boots,

and despite the fact that the Taos win the battle for Dawn Lake and repair a giant rift in their culture, they are still all doomed. Neither Martiniano nor the tribe he represents can avoid the “engulfing white,” nor will any ceremony, dance, or cure protect them from the collapse of their culture. Waters is drawing on commonly held beliefs of his (and today’s) era. The prognosis is bad: Indian civilization is diagnosed as terminal, no treatment, no cure.

In this novel we see medicine referenced several times. Many of the references to medicine are of the form of Momaday’s knowledge, such as the refrain: “God knows, will help us, give us medicine” (Waters 15, 19, 25). But often, it is more similar to *Medicine Man*’s “juju,” a superstitious catch-all for the unexplainable: “[Snakes] were his bad medicine” (Waters 132). The discussions of medicine men are wistful remembrances of things past: “A man...remembered a medicine man whose power was so great he could fly through the air like a bird to the four corners of the earth and return before daybreak” (Waters 83). However, even with all the powers Indian medicine has, it cannot ultimately stop its own impending death.

Waters is a white scholar on the outside of native culture looking in. He is part historian, part linguist, part anthropologist. He is studying a foreign culture, and, importantly, he is *presenting* it to a white audience. We see examples of this early in the novel, in the way he describes the culture, and in his narrator’s tone of voice:

The plaza below awoke with life. Women waddling down to the stream balancing water jars and tin buckets on their blue-black heads. Children, naked and shivering, running after more faggots. Men returning from the corrals to stand in front of ovens or against the sunny walls. Wrapped to

the eyes in cheap, cotton blankets, rolling corn-husk cigarettes, saying nothing, seeing all. *It was the rhythm of Indian life: an unvarying, age-old pattern whose mutations changed regularly and simultaneously with the patterns of day and night.* (8-9, emphasis added)

The descriptions in the passage above are clearly those of an outsider. His description of the women's "blue-black heads" and the "naked and shivering" children is ethnocentric, focusing on elements of the culture that Anglo-Americans would consider shameful or primitive, "Indian life" rather than life, "blue-black heads" rather than heads, "corn-husk cigarettes" rather than cigarettes. The italicized portion most clearly demonstrates the author's removed status from the group he is describing. He speaks of "Indian life" as an unexamined series of rituals that center around the changing of the seasons. His self-contradicting description of the "unvarying... mutations" of the culture places him firmly outside it. Of course, Waters wrote in a different era, and imposing postmodern views on his novel is anachronistic. Nonetheless, it is necessary to examine these points to understand Waters' view of culture and medicine.

Unfortunately, the vibrant truth of the history of the Taos in *The Man Who Killed the Deer* is somewhat dampened by Waters' colonialist view that the culture he is documenting is dying. Waters' ending is bittersweet, with the old trader Byers remarking that, despite the victory of Dawn Lake, it is only a matter of time until the Pueblo Indians are gone forever. Under this worldview, there can be no cure. Because Byers is a cultural hybrid, he is in a unique position to help the society thrive. He has the unique ability to serve as a liaison with the outside world. But he is not a healer figure; rather he is somewhat of an anti-healer—not to say that he makes the community "sicker," but

rather that he does not help it grow beyond his limited worldview. We will have to move a few years into the future and a few hundred miles away, to Laguna, before we see a worldview that permits the survivance of Indian medicine.

Chapter Two: Leslie Marmon Silko and the Way to Healing

For Leslie Marmon Silko, medicine is not something that is controlled by a learned few and passed onto the fortunate many. Rather, it is a reflexive act, a give and take between healer and patient. In *Ceremony*, Silko shows how Indian cultures deconstruct the healing act, changing it from a binary paradigm with the healer at the center and the patient at the margin to a continuous spectrum, where doctor and patient seek wellness together. This reflects one of the central precepts of postmodern thought, the rejection of the infallibility of science and technology (and by association, medical science and technology) in favor of a worldview in which the exaltation of science is questioned and deconstructed. Silko directly challenges the hegemonic dominance of Western (Anglo) medicine.

A postmodern text such as Silko's *Ceremony* will undoubtedly attempt to deconstruct the mainstream (white) view of medical science as absolute. Thus, she presents a hero, Tayo, who suffers from a disease not curable by white medicine. His sickness, a deeply spiritual illness that stems from his hardships on the Bataan death march, is superficially similar to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). His "battle fatigue," as World War II era physicians termed it, displays symptoms such as nausea, malaise, cold sweats, hallucinations, fatigue, paranoia, and sociopathy. Silko could portray the white doctors as ill-intentioned racists, but she does not want them to be susceptible to such an easy dismissal. Instead, they are everything they ought to be: rational, scientific, and logical. Thus, when Tayo's symptoms suggest PTSD, for them it

can be nothing else. But Silko demonstrates to the readers that Tayo's illness is something more than what the white doctors believe.

Ann Folwell Stanford shows how Tayo's illness is not improved by the white doctors:

The doctors insist that Tayo repudiate his tribal loyalties, repudiate the knowledge he already has, but in his own mind has neither fully understood nor legitimized. They urge him to treat himself as an isolated—somehow autonomous—individual, advice that undermines the requirement of the Hippocratic Oath to “do no harm.” (43)

What Tayo needs at this point is not less connection with his people, but more. The misguided attempts by white doctors to steer him away from his own culture only make him sink deeper into alienation and loss. The treatments administered in the Veterans Administration hospital, such as his isolation in the white room, only makes him descend further into his illness, which he describes as a creeping invisibility.

It is noteworthy that Silko chooses to have the disease affect his visual presence, rather than his physical self. By emphasizing the sense of sight, Silko suggests that Tayo's connection to sanity is based on empirical evidence, rather than “*cogito ergo sum*” logic. “Sight” is used in both the literal and metaphorical sense: she appeals to the rationality of the physical senses, as well as using one of the world's oldest tropes for comprehension. She also implies that the doctors are blinded to the actual conditions of Tayo's illness. Because the doctor cannot “see” Tayo, he cannot make sense of him. Tayo's culture and sense of spirituality are foreign to the doctor. Thus, while Tayo's

symptoms appear to be perfectly sensible to this man of science, he is “blind” to Tayo’s true problem.

The white doctors have no real appreciation for Tayo’s axis mundi, so they cannot correctly interpret Tayo’s symptoms. Because they cannot reconcile the culture gap, they do not have the proper language to “read” (diagnose) the “language” (symptoms) of Tayo’s sickness. They cannot allow themselves to believe it is a spiritual sickness; there is no language for such a problem in modern (white) medicine. Indeed, there is no room for such spiritual illness in Anglo culture. From the scientific point of view of an Anglo doctor, such spiritual dis-ease is irrational, the result of superstitious religious beliefs, not rational logic. They are trapped in what B.A. St. Andrews calls “the dualisms of Cartesian thought” (89). However, to an Indian healer, for whom St. Andrews suggests the world is based on “circularity and interconnectedness,” the lack of acknowledgment of spiritual sickness is itself a form of spiritual sickness. Thus, isolating Tayo in the white room, further disconnecting him from the natural world, will have no favorable effects on his illness. It is the treatment he needs least. As soon as Tayo leaves the VA hospital, he regains his physical presence, albeit tenuously. Thus he begins to heal, in a critique of the efficacy of mental hospitals.

Given the inherent inability of Western medicine to cure a spiritual disease, Tayo (and Silko) must seek alternative treatment. Tayo embarks on a journey to find a suitable cure that will take him far from white medicine. He must learn to cure himself, to become his own medicine man. On the journey to spiritual redemption, he will encounter three such healers, and eventually, like Waters’ Martiniano, become one himself.

Each healer that Tayo meets is associated with a different medicinal herb, according to Thomas F. Weso. The first, Ku'oosh, is characterized by his use of Indian tea. Betonie, the powerful Navajo medicine man, is connected to tobacco. Ts'eh, the young woman whom Tayo meets on the mountain, is most frequently associated with morning glory vine. Finally, when Tayo completes the ceremony, he is linked to the night-blooming datura plant, known by many names, such as jimson weed, locoweed, deadly nightshade, or belladonna (Erowid).

It is notable that as the ceremony progresses, the chemical effects of the medicine plants become stronger, from a mild stimulant (Indian tea) to a potent hallucinogen and deadly poison (datura). Each of these plants soothes different parts of Tayo's illness: The Indian tea and cornmeal gruel that Ku'oosh gives Tayo restores his nutrition and energy. Tobacco is an MAO-inhibitor and anti-depressant to relieve his mood swings. Morning Glory, whose flowers bloom every day and die every night, helps Tayo to understand his place in the life cycle and come closer to nature. Datura, as we will see later, will help Tayo take an active role in healing his environment.

The use of entheogenic medicine seems to have a popular role in both Native American culture and Western medicine. Hallucinogens, such as datura, morning glory, psilocybin mushrooms, marijuana, or peyote, have often played prominent roles in Indian rituals such as sweat lodge ceremonies, particularly in popular representations of them by white authors. To be sure, the historical precedent of using entheogens as a way to pursue spiritual truth dates back long before the rise of Western medicine. However these ancient traditions were used to propagate a perception of American Indians as a drug-using culture, which became one of the means by which their religions were

marginalized and criminalized by the dominant culture. Ironically, it was not too long after most of the religious practices involving entheogenic medicine were criminalized that Western medicine experienced its own renaissance in psychopharmaceuticals. Drugs such as lithium, Ritalin, Prozac, or any of the dozens of other psychoactive prescription medicines have replaced traditional herbs and plants to create a legal form of entheogen endorsed by the American Medical Association and the Food and Drug Administration.

The criminalization of traditional entheogenic drugs was a part of the Harrison Tax Act of 1914, a revolutionary act that endowed Congress with powers it had never before had. Until then, such a piece of legislation would have come in the form of a state or local action; drug laws were not considered the province of the national legislature. However, many politicians noted that social problems of the upper classes were stemming from the use of cocaine and opiates, especially the newest and most dangerous of these, heroin, which at the time were largely unregulated. Also, drugs such as marijuana and peyote were associated with undesirable elements of society, namely, blacks, Latinos, and American Indians. So the Harrison Act was passed. Drugs such as marijuana, cocaine, opiates, and hallucinogens were not explicitly outlawed; rather, in order to possess these substances, one had to first buy a tax stamp for them, which was impossible, as the stamps were never printed. The result was the *de facto* prohibition of these substances and criminalization of many American Indian religious practices (Erowid).

Silko uses these themes in *Ceremony*. By setting her novel against the backdrop of reservation life, and prior to the rise of psychopharmaceuticals in Western medicine, she places the action in a world where mentally ill patients are without much recourse.

The era from the end of the Second World War until late 1970's saw the prominence of physical treatments for mental illness, including electro-shock therapy and the popularization of lobotomies, as depicted in Ken Kesey's classic novel, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. It is this state of Western medicine that Silko's healers critique.

The first healer is Ku'oosh, a Laguna medicine man whose power seems to stem more from his influence on the Pueblo community than from his contact with the spirit world. He is called to examine Tayo after it seems unlikely that the white medicine has or will serve any curative properties. Tayo's aunt resists the summoning of Ku'oosh, fearing it will jeopardize her status in the white, Christian community. However, at Grandma's insistence, Ku'oosh comes and speaks to Tayo. Throughout the interview, the old man's language is emphasized, particularly the vagaries of his dialect. His language "was filled with the intricacies of a continuing process, and with a strength inherent in spider webs woven across paths and through hills where early in the morning the sun becomes entangled in each filament of web" (35). He effects a brief cure for Tayo, enabling the young man to eat without nausea. But his cure is mostly a linguistic one. He is unable to comprehend the depths of Tayo's illness; he cannot understand the cruelty of the warfare that Tayo has endured.

It was all too alien to comprehend, the mortars and the big guns; and even if he could have taken the old man to see the target areas, even if he could have led him through the fallen jungle trees and muddy craters of torn earth to show him the dead, the old man would not have believed in anything so monstrous...Not even old time witches killed like that. (37)

Ku'oosh's inability to comprehend Tayo's illness makes him ultimately ineffective as a healer, but he will lead Tayo down the path to wellness.

The next healer is the powerful old Betonie, a mixed-blood Diné medicine man in Gallup, New Mexico, who figures much more prominently in Tayo's healing ceremony. Contrasted with Ku'oosh, Betonie's language is much plainer; he uses little traditional dialect, but instead speaks in English. His ceremonies are substantively more contemporary as well. This is the central idea behind his philosophy: if ceremonies are static, unable to adapt over time, then before long they will become obsolete. Rather, the ceremonies must change with the people. Betonie is not sacrilegious; he does not treat the ceremonies lightly. He holds to the ancient principles of propriety. Certain ceremonies must only be performed at certain times of year, at certain places, at certain times of day. But Betonie is more concerned with the acts of a ceremony than the words. For Betonie, the words change, the people who speak them come and go.

The idea that the ceremonies should remain unchanged and static throughout the generations is, for Betonie, foolish and impossible. As the world changes, so too must the ceremonies. Some in Betonie's community have regarded him as a heretic for making changes to the ceremonies, but he disregards their lack of trust. Silko uses Betonie to challenge the Western view of American Indian medicine as static—no longer will Indian healers be practitioners of a dead art, a relic of a past religion that is sadly out of date. Betonie also challenges American Indian prejudice against new ideas, an idea that somehow older ideas are better; without progress, Betonie argues, a culture will shrivel and die.

The third healer, and most powerful yet, is Ts'eh, a mountain woman with whom Tayo becomes enamored and who guides Tayo on the next phase of his ceremony. Ts'eh is connected in the text to the Laguna myth of Ts'its'tsi'nako, the spider, who weaves the world by thinking of it. The narrative of *Ceremony* is framed by Ts'its'tsi'nako's thoughts; she thinks the story as it happens. As Ts'eh, Thought Woman directly enters the narrative and helps restore Tayo by helping him find Josiah's cattle. Ts'eh is associated with the morning glory vine, a mild hallucinogen with a long history of use among tribes of the southwest. Morning glory is linked to sunrise, the time when the blue flowers bloom. Thus, it is connected to Thought Woman's frame in the novel: "Sunrise, accept this offering." Unlike her predecessors, Ts'eh does not claim to be a healer. However, she does show Tayo the next steps he must take in his personal ceremony.

The fourth and final healer is Tayo himself, who completes the ceremony at Jackpile mine and gathers the seeds of the little blue plant (night-blooming datura, a potent hallucinogen) for Ts'eh. Tayo, by completing the ceremony, restores his mental and spiritual health, as well as the health of the community. Paula Gunn Allen argues that by planting the seeds at Jackpile, Tayo becomes initiated into motherhood (133). She sees his healing process as a feminized journey to a matriarchal consciousness. The masculine, destructive elements of Laguna, as personified by Harvey, Leroy, Pinkie, and Emo, are purged from the community and Josiah's cattle are restored. The elements of witchery are (partially) vanquished, and Tayo is able to accept his role in nature and grieve for Rocky and Josiah.

Datura is a very interesting plant, as it has the ability to purify soil contaminated with uranium. Because water is so scarce in its native habitat, it will metabolize heavy

water, making the plant itself radioactive. *Datura* appears earlier in *Ceremony*, in the legend of Pa'caya'nyi, the Ck'o'yo witch who corrupts the people of Reedleaf town (46-9), who uses "locoweed" (47) in his altar. *Datura* also appears as "the violet-colored weed that killed the mule" (237). These examples demonstrate the potential dangers of medicinal power, and the necessity of responsibility for healers. To know and understand the use of medicinal herbs is part of their stock in trade; misuse or abuse of this knowledge can have lethal results.

That Tayo should become a healer is necessary. In Silko's view of Indian medicine, self-healing is an important process. The ill must want to make themselves well. It is important that the healing ritual occurs at Jackpile mine, a site where much damage was done to the natural world and the community. Connie A. Jacobs gives an excellent history of Jackpile, demonstrating how the mine's operation, from early 1952 until just before Silko published the book in 1977, caused a number of social problems for the Laguna, from illness in the form of cancer, all the way to structural damage in their homes due to the collapse of large underground tunnels (45). In the larger scope, it was the mining of uranium from the soil, along with other mismanaged environmental policies, that left the world out of balance. Likewise, James Tarter argues that the location of Jackpile is noteworthy. It is Tayo's relationship to that place at the novel's conclusion that helps him see how "all the stories fit together" (106). Jackpile is described as an open, festering sore in the earth. Thus, when Tayo completes the ceremony by planting *datura* seeds, he not only performs a curative ritual on himself, but he also expands the ritual to include the community at large. The promulgation of *datura* plant in this place signifies the greater healing of the earth. That *datura* itself becomes

radioactive is a process which paradoxically suggests that illness, at least illness as serious as radiation poisoning, cannot be cured, only transplanted.

But ultimately, in Silko's vision of medicine, it is the self that must heal. By extension, if the Earth itself becomes sick, as in the case of radiation poisoning, only the Earth can heal itself (i.e., by creating natural cleansers such as datura). Within this paradigm, on a smaller scale, only Tayo can finally heal himself. He may enlist the help of others in diagnosis and seeking the remedy, but it is only by his own actions that he will be cured. As Susan Scarberry describes it, "Tayo must take a good dose of the past before he can feel well about the present" (22). Owens similarly notes that Tayo's story "is a remembering, a putting together of past, present and future into a coherent fabric of timeless identity" ("Essence" 51). Like Martiniano, Tayo lacks a connection to his culture and his people's history.

Those Indians who have accepted a subordinate role to whites in contemporary culture have allowed themselves to be colonized, allowed the witchery to infect their lives. Certain among them, as exemplified in *Ceremony* by Auntie Thelma and Emo, have devalued their own cultures and elevated white culture to the status of a goal to be attained. The unfortunate trap, of course, is that Auntie and Emo will never be accepted into the white community they ingratiate themselves upon. Silko discusses this very problematic when she places Rocky and Tayo in the uniform of Army servicemen, and they are accepted by white culture, *but only while they wear the uniform*. As soon as Tayo is discharged, he is relegated to the status of outcast. Because Auntie and Emo, and other characters like them, seek to be accepted by white culture, and because they never will be, Silko suggests that they are victims of the same illness that afflicts Tayo:

witchery. Yet, their illness goes undiagnosed by white medicine; no protocol exists within Western medicine for curing ailments of the spirit or culture. What separates Silko's Indian healers from white doctors is the quality of hybridity.

All of Silko's healers are hybrid in some form or another, giving them the ability to cross borders and transcend accepted forms of behavior and thought. At the very basic level, all of Silko's healers exhibit the ability to communicate with the spirit worlds, the four worlds below. This unique bond with things unseen is a form of hybridity. Unlike normal humans, they are not confined by what they see in the fifth world, and unlike spirits and animals, they have the frailty of being judged. For this reason, hybrids are not to be thought of as necessarily stronger beings, only unique. While all of Silko's healers are hybrids between the human and spirit worlds, each is a hybrid in his or her specific way.

Ku'oosh is the least hybrid of the four healers, and thus the least effective. He is a hybrid only between the Americanized aspect of Laguna culture, represented by Auntie and Emo, and the more culturally centered set, which is more concerned with spirituality. Ku'oosh represents both sides of the community. He is initially called upon as a spokesperson for the old men of the town when Tayo's problems threaten to raise the attention of the white government. He is the last chance Tayo has among the community elders, before they decide to commit him to a mental hospital. The main reason the community elders are concerned with Tayo is not for the sake of his health, but rather to prevent the BIA from intervening, and thus injuring their image. Ku'oosh is a member of the more spiritual group in the city, but his age and experience have given him the ability to move between the two groups. While Aunt Thelma dismisses Ku'oosh as a witch

doctor with a “bag of weeds and dust” (34), she nonetheless has a modicum of respect for him, as she demonstrates when she silently leaves the room when he arrives.

Betonie is a much more powerful healer, and also much more hybrid. He lacks the hybridity that Ku’oosh has; that is, he has been completely rejected by the secular partisans of the tribes of New Mexico. He is relegated to his shabby hogan in Gallup, where he watches with a mixture of amusement and derision as American Indians put on a minstrel show for white tourists. An exile, he has little contact with anyone in the mainstream community. He is however, a racial hybrid, a mixed-blood, a mestizo of Navajo and Mexican, and is identified by his hazel-green eyes. His mixed ancestry is part of the means by which he is exiled. Yet his exile is a part of the means by which he gains his power. It is he who explains to Tayo the long and complicated history of witchery. He helps Tayo understand that most whites are as much victims of witchery as most Indians, and there are people on both sides who are benefiting from the exploitation of American Indian land. He also begins Tayo’s ceremony by initiating the song and telling Tayo where he must go and what he must do to complete the cycle.

The mountain woman Ts’eh is a hybrid between the human world and the animal world; her connection (marriage) to Mountain Lion, the hunter, as well as her alter ego, Ts’its’tsi’nako, Thought-Woman, the spider, also links her to multiple worlds. She is a hybrid between the world of fact and the world of legend. She is the personified connection between the present action of *Ceremony* and the mythic tales of Laguna legend that Silko interweaves into the narrative. Tayo finds her on Mt. Taylor the place of Keres mythical origin. Kenneth Lincoln argues that she represents water (56), a curative element to the dry desert, as well as an important medicine for Tayo’s particular

curse. She heals Tayo withentheogenic drugs, helping him blur the line between reality and imagination. Her open sexuality suggests that she too is a cultural outcast.

Tayo himself is also a hybrid on several levels. Like Ku'oosh, he is connected both to the younger, irreverent members of the Laguna community by his friends Harvey and Leroy, as well as the more spiritual, traditional members of the community by his rejection of the dominance of white culture. Like Betonie, he is a mestizo, his father of unknown origin. Like Ts'eh and Betonie, he is something of an exile, preferring the solitude of the ranch or the mountain to active community membership. He is also connected through Ts'eh to the world of legend, especially the legend of Buzzard's purification of Reedleaf town, which he reenacts at Jackpile mine.

All of Silko's healers are hybrids; in fact, her entire novel is a hybrid, attempting to connect the oral tradition of American Indian legend to the written tradition of European works. As Beidler and Nelson point out, the present action of the novel is a fairly straightforward story. However, it complicates itself because it is told through the point of view of Tayo, who is sick (5). Silko presents a story that, in many ways, has the same shape as a classic Euro-centric epic (a tragic hero, a quest, an antithesis, a romantic interlude), but refuses to let the story fit that pre-determined space. She uses postmodern themes to show that the European linear narrative is not the best fit for an American Indian legend. Thus the narrative becomes jumbled and broken for the first hundred pages. Then, as Tayo begins to recover, the novel takes on a more linear storyline. Rather than electing to have Tayo defeat his enemy, Emo, in a final struggle, he instead stays hidden, and Emo is eventually defeated by his own demons. This is but one of the

ways in which Silko both uses and resists the conventions of Western literature, thus making her novel a hybrid between the two forms.

Silko's work shows how hybridity leads to self-awareness, a necessary component in the Indian view of medicine. As her novel challenges genre and form, her hero challenges culture and social pressure. He is a survivant character, occupying the borderlands between past and future. Tayo's struggle for wellness eventually brings peace to an entire town. But Silko must be careful in her tale. The way to healing often leads dangerously near to the way of witchery. As we see in the climax of the novel, Tayo must resist when the pressure is greatest. By not killing Emo, he defeats the witchery and saves himself.

Silko knows all too well, however, that even if Tayo heals himself, he will not be able to solve the problems of the larger society single-handedly. He can do his small part, as a healer, by planting datura at Jackpile mine. He can resist the urge to indulge his more violent side and kill Emo, but that alone won't stop the infighting that is holding back Indian culture. As Edith Swan notes, witchery moves on a counter-cycle to good health (324). Thus, as Tayo's condition improves, he weakens the witchery around him. He can only lead by example, and hope that by doing so, he heals part of his community. He will need to convince a lot of people, of both races and in between, that a new language of healing is needed. Silko opens this door; it will be up to others to follow.

Chapter Three: Towards a New Language of Recovery on the King's Highway

In the third epigraph at the beginning of this work, N. Scott Momaday writes how Mammedaty comes into “possession of a powerful medicine” (73). For Momaday, medicine is neither a tool for subjugation, nor a gift to be given out of pity, but rather a way to knowledge and healing. In *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, Momaday gives a mixed-genre history of the Kiowa people, discussing their creation stories and oral history, combined with anecdotes, memoirs, and poems. Rainy Mountain is a peak in Oklahoma that became a spiritual center for the Kiowa people, a church akin to the Taos’ relationship to Blue Lake. In the earlier histories that Momaday recounts, including the story of Mammedaty, the Kiowa live within eyesight of Rainy Mountain. But when the Momaday’s family moves to New Mexico to live on the Jemez Pueblo reservation, Rainy Mountain becomes a figment of legend. The Kiowa make pilgrimages to Rainy Mountain, but the mountain, as a symbol, will never be the same for their culture. They are now one step further removed from their own history.

That they keep their history alive is a testament to the strength of their medicine. Momaday demonstrates that a strong history serves as a balm to the people, uniting them with each other and bonding them to their community. Momaday understands the medicinal value of tradition and community, and *The Way to Rainy Mountain* is an attempt to keep his people connected to that important part of their past.

In the same way that history can be a medicine for Momaday, Louis Owens shows us how some histories can be painful wounds. In *Mixedblood Messages*, Owens refers to a letter by the Admiral himself, Christopher Columbus, who has defied the order

of the King of Spain and sent a group of American slaves back to Europe. Columbus justifies this by framing his actions in the context of education. “I will take six of them from here to Your Highnesses in order that they may learn to speak” (qtd. in Owens 3). The obvious lie inside this statement is not lost on Owens, who remarks, “When Columbus heard their language,” which was every bit as nuanced and complicated as his, “he did not hear speech” (211). For Owens, Columbus’ reasoning for violating the orders of the King only makes the enslavement that much more insulting. Owens knows well the power of speech, and knows that the indigenous people of America possessed it at the time of Spanish Conquest as they possess it now. When Columbus committed that first act of enslavement, he initiated a chain of events that would lead to the near-total genocide of an entire hemisphere.

One way to resist that colonization, both geographical and linguistic, is through the implicit power of mixed-blood heritage. One term that Owens uses to describe half-breeds is “cultural breaker,” playing on a popular term for ethnohistorians, “cultural broker” (40-1). Owens finds this term very interesting. The sense of broker in play here is the idea of a middleman, a person who is able to go between two parties. Yet Owens notes the economic subtext to the word, implying buying and selling of culture. In this light, culture brokers are those who bring culture from one side to the other. Before postmodernism, this flow of culture was unidirectional, i.e. from white to red (or black, brown, etc.). However, postmodern thought deconstructs this flow, describing instead a multilateral diffusion of culture from among many groups. The cultural broker enables the “exchange” of culture among the many groups, giving “red” to the “white” and vice versa.

The casting of cultural behaviors in economic terms is one that bears some exploration. Perhaps this commodification of culture is a Western capitalist point of view, for we tend to see all things in terms of “value” for exchange on the open market. There is literally nothing that cannot be purchased.

This includes medicine (much to the displeasure of many medical professionals). Medicine is no less a commodity than any other service. The customer (patient) has a need (let us say chemotherapy). The merchant (doctor) has the ability to fill this need (medical experience and training). So the customer exchanges money for the service (omitting the tedious middleman of health insurance), which the merchant performs, and rewards the merchant with a high standard of living. There has developed in modern Western medicine a proprietary regard for medical knowledge. The doctor “controls” the treatment, in fact guards it very closely. The knowledge is considered to be sacred: only those with the “proper” training may come to possess it, and even then they must use it responsibly. Medicine flows unilaterally, from the doctor (center) to the patient (margin). At least, that is the Western model.

Traditional Indian medicine, as seen in *Ceremony* and *The Man Who Killed the Deer*, follows a different route. It is much more decentered. The patient becomes the source of the cure, as well as the recipient. The healer is *guide*, helping the ill along the route to wellness. It is a journey they share. The healer may give advice and aid understanding, but it is the patient who must take the necessary steps to healing. Indian medicine is holistic, addressing the concerns of the mind, body, and spirit as one, rather than dividing these into distinct classes (psychological, somatic, and philosophical).

Of course, Western medicine distinguishes itself from Indian medicine by placing itself into the unassailable category of “Science.” By turning the doctor into a scientist (instead of a human being), Western medicine hopes to eliminate as many variables as possible and isolate the specific causes of disease. This is not to say that this epistemology is a necessarily bad thing. Cancer treatments, for example, such as chemotherapy and radiation treatments, have become much more effective in the last several years, in part because Science has helped doctors understand how cancer works and how it attacks the body.¹ Then again, many “alternative” healers have argued, with considerable success, that somatic medicine is not nearly as effective on its own as when combined with such mental and spiritual remedies as positive attitudes, low-stress environments, and the presence of family members and friends.

In the act of transforming medicine into a commodity, Western culture can then quantify it, make it rational, divisible, expressible as a fraction. In the face of an atmosphere of growing multiculturalism, doctors are seeing many more patients of ethnically diverse backgrounds. Thus, a gap appears between the hegemony (medical administrators, doctors, nurses, all custodians of medical knowledge) and the new “customers” who cannot relate because of cultural, educational, or linguistic hurdles. So an economic need arises for “cultural brokers,” people who are able to bridge that gap of language and customs. This attempt to reduce the grand canyon of cultural difference to an economically quantifiable “need,” a mere problem to be fixed, is a problematic that Owens recognizes. He plays on the absurdity of the attempt by Western culture to reduce

¹ It has often been suggested that the very Science that has revealed so much about cancer is what caused it in the first place (see arguments regarding electromagnetic radiation produced by household appliances or cases concerning chemicals found in drinking water near power plants). This point of view has been contested by many oncologists in whose point of view cancer is a natural, emergent condition predicated by our increased lifespans.

all things to economic simplicities, like Jonathan Swift's Royal Society attempting to extract sunlight from cucumbers.

In any case, Owens sees power in the cultural brokers. His play on the term (cultural breakers) is one that suggests an almost violent rejection of the constraints of cultural pressure. He notes their recurring presence in works by American Indian authors and their ability to travel places that other figures cannot. In this way, they are similar to Gloria Anzaldúa's *mestiza*² figures. In *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Anzaldúa describes an emergent mixing of races that spreads out from areas where two or more cultures come into direct contact. Anzaldúa refers in this case to south Texas/north Mexico, where many cultures come into play. Spanish, English, Mexican, Texan, and others all crash together. Anzaldúa describes this connection in a violent way: "The U.S.-Mexican border *es una herida abierta* [is an open wound] where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of the two worlds merging to form a third country—a border culture" (25, my translation). The culture resulting from this violent meeting is toughened, resistant to pressures from either side.

Northern New Mexico, the setting of both Waters' and Silko's novels, is famously a "tri-cultural" setting, where Anglo, Indian, and Latino cultures all come together. The unique blending of cultures has made New Mexico a favorite retreat for writers and artists, as evinced by the "renaissance" in Taos in the 1960's and 1970's. This contact is no-doubt just as culturally violent as the south Texas of Anzaldúa. The "grating" would

² It should be noted here that Latino/as are not by mere virtue of their mixed ethnic heritage cultural breakers. The common cultural heritage of Latino/a culture makes them a distinct party unto themselves. The *mestiza* that Anzaldúa writes about are a part of the larger latino/a community, but separate themselves by adopting different *cultural* practices, not just by having a heritage of mixed ethnicity.

not be lessened by the presence of yet another culture. The image of a great cultural “wound” suggests a need for a medicine of sorts to help the cultures heal. This medicine comes in the form of the *mestiza*, in this case resultant from the grating of three cultures and would be that much more desensitized to the prospect of a static cultural identity.

Anzaldúa has little to say about medicine, but it is noteworthy that the healers in such contemporary works as Rudolfo Anaya’s *Bless Me Ultima*, Ana Castillo’s *So Far From God*, and Silko’s *Ceremony* are all cultural hybrids like those Anzaldúa describes. Curandero/as and shamans such as these are often culture breakers. But why? Why does someone who crosses a border become gifted in medicine?

In John Huston’s *Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, it is a white man who “joins the tribe” and becomes a medicine man. This is a highly unlikely scenario, as most cultures, be they tribal or otherwise, would not permit a role of highly spiritual significance to be filled by an outsider. Yet there is some deeper, underlying stereotype invoked in this scene. For some reason, white America believes that, if our prospects as entrepreneurs fail, we can always fall back on promising careers as colonial medicine men. This is partly arrogance fueled by the belief in our scientific reason and technological superiority. But I believe that there is something deeper still, a truth about the role a healer plays in society.

Healers are brokers, if not in the economic sense. They are go-betweens, operating in many levels. For Walter Huston’s character, Howard, it was his fluency in Spanish and his diplomacy (“I’ll be worshipped...for telling people things they want to hear.”) that made him the ideal candidate for medicine man in the small village. As he noted, “Good medicine men are born, not made.” In *Ceremony*, all the healers, Ku’oosh,

Betonie, Ts'eh, and Tayo himself, are hybrids. They are between cultures. The Indian sense of medicine, that of cunning and knowledge, implies an ability to go between worlds. The Indian healer can cross between the physical world and the world of spirits where the true source of illness lies.

Thus, healers are travelers along a new El Camino Real. Historically, the “King’s Highway” ran through the heart of New Spain, from Mexico City in the South to Taos in the North, through El Paso, Chihuahua and Zacatecas. After the Mexican-American War and the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, when an imaginary line was drawn through a once unified region, the King’s Highway became a focal point for international trade, as well as an issue of contention and a symbol of the residual anger after the Mexican Cession. The new King’s Highway is a cultural one. It also leaps across arbitrary and imaginary borders and frontiers. It facilitates commerce (a cultural broker) and spreads wealth and knowledge. Those traveling on the new King’s Highway bring with them everything they know and leave at the other end. There they pick up everything for sale and return it to their point of origin.

One of those travelers is Gerald Vizenor. In *Crossbloods*, *Manifest Manners*, and the introduction to *Narrative Chance*, he writes of postindians, those indigenous Americans who have moved beyond the label of “Indian.” “The Indian,” he writes, “was an occidental invention that became a bankable simulation...The postindian is the absence of the invention, and the end of representation in literature” (*Manifest* 1981). For Vizenor, the concept of an Indian identity is itself a Euro-centric point of view. Ignoring for the time being the insult of neither knowing nor caring that the indigenous people of America had no connection to those of the East Indies, the idea that two continents worth

of people, whose nations numbered in the hundreds if not thousands, were all racially alike enough to be lumped in together demonstrates the ignorance of ethnocentrism. On the “death” of the Indian, Vizenor writes, “The last ‘savages’ were captured in emulsion by celebrated photographers, ‘specimens’ were paraded at international expositions, and tribal cultures were revised in colonial histories and dioramas” (*Crossbloods* 4). Vizenor suggests that, as Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show strove to frame the history of America into a story of Manifest Destiny, the “Indian” became the tragic hero who by necessity laid his culture aside and solemnly proceeded to the Happy Hunting Grounds.

But this Indian wasn’t real. It never existed. What died was the invention of the Vanishing American. “Native American Indian literatures have been pressed into cultural categories...Tribal cultures, in this sense, have been invented as ‘absolute fakes’ and consumed in social science monologues” (*Narrative* 5). Indian-ness is an imposed identity; it did not exist for Americans before Columbus came. They saw themselves as merely human. But Europeans, with their linguistic colonialism, convinced them that they were Indians, Vanishing Americans, and an illness began to spread throughout their culture.

There was however one way to cure the illness, one part of Indian-ness that has survived and continues to survive. Trickster has been with them all along, and he continues to fight for them today. Trickster is Ken Kesey’s Chief Bromden, feigning muteness and achieving invisibility. Trickster is Martiniano, feasting on deer and bringing Blue Lake back to his people. Trickster is Tayo, bringing in the cattle and duping the ranchers. Trickster is Coyote, Trickster is Fox, Trickster is awake and aware. Trickster uses guile and quickness to outthink his opponents, rather than force and law.

He exploits weakness with diplomatic skill, rather than pushing and fighting the war the white man's way. Vizenor sees the continuing re-emergence of Trickster as an example of survivance, a battle to exist that Indians are winning. There is no Vanishing. There is continuation and life.

It is interesting that many critics and authors, myself no exception, have framed the healing process in the rhetoric of a journey. The likening of medicine to travel is not entirely unknown to Western medicine, but it receives the most attention in discussions of American Indian healing. Arturo J. Aldama goes so far as to suggest that Tayo's recovery is a "journey home." Aldama makes explicit reference to Tayo's status as a crossblood, uses Indian medicine to move "to a decolonized state of self-acceptance" (157), thus deconstructing the dichotomy of colonist/subject. Within the language of conquest and colonialism, we find yet another journey. Europeans literally traveled across the oceans to come to the Americas; the pilgrim settlers of New England took a metaphorical journey to find spiritual reckoning in a land without sin.

We see this journey in Momaday's work. He sees the struggle of the Kiowa to find Rainy Mountain as a pilgrimage of sorts. He argues that the journey is never-ending, culminating in the spirit world where Rainy Mountain is always already there. Like the Taos and Laguna, the Kiowa are spiritually ill. Rainy Mountain becomes a symbol for all they lack, but Momaday knows they need more than a totemic mountain. Their recovery will take them on a journey to lands far more distant.

It is in the rhetoric of a journey to wellness that the agency of the hybrid is illuminated. This language suggests a spatial concept of medicine, health being "over

there somewhere” and illness being where we are now. The “way” or “path” or “road” to healing often crosses a border, such as those discussed in Anzaldúa, a place that comes between one’s present location and one’s goal. Mick McAllister discusses this border as a metonymical relationship to the “American frontier” of lore. “The American frontier has been the base for an essentially American idea, the idea that the direction of our lives and culture is infinitely linear” (149). For McAllister, this metaphysical frontier is one that must be crossed to effect meaningful spiritual healing. Hybrids have the ability to cross these borders, and the border between spiritual illness and well being is the ultimate frontier.

Some questions are left. Are *all* healers hybrids, as are the ones in Silko’s and Waters’ works? If so, is healing necessarily a hybrid act, or is hybridity a necessary precondition for the healing act? That is to say, because correlation does not determine causation, it is hard to know which causes which. The focus is on medicine, the Indian definition. Knowledge, like a drug, is addictive. The more medicine one takes, the more one needs and wants. Perhaps that knowledge which has a high potential for abuse will be outlawed.

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