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The Story is Everything:
The Path to Renewal in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*

A thesis
presented to
the faculty of the Department of English
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of the requirements for the degree
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by
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ABSTRACT

The Story is Everything:
The Path to Renewal in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*

by

Tracy Y. Kilgore

This is a study of Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* analyzing the process of renewal and the use of stories as guides.

Silko's work deals with problems faced by all who experience the death and destruction of war, a problem complicated by a Native American heritage. Tayo's struggle to complete his ceremony and find renewal is intertwined with his interaction with the medicine man Betonie and the mysterious woman Ts'eh. By the end of the novel, Silko shows that only through a respect for the world can humankind achieve completeness and harmony.

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CHAPTER 1:
REDISCOVERING THE STORY:
TAYO'S STRUGGLE TO ACCEPT THE PAST AND SEEK THE FUTURE

From the beginning of *Ceremony*, Leslie Marmon Silko tells the reader that the story itself is everything. In the first half of the novel, Tayo must learn to trust the old stories again and realize the power within himself. Part of this growth comes through observing Emo and the other veterans and seeing how living through the wrong stories hinders any growth, instead leading to pain and loss. Through Tayo and Emo, Silko shows that fiction may become reality, that those with hope who search for new ways will survive, and that those who live in the past and disregard change will find only evil in the world. Prose and poetry are intertwined, with the poetry telling the stories and the novel showing the story being remembered, being changed and used to negotiate a path through the modern, confusing world. The line between fiction and reality is blurred, and fiction creates reality. Tayo has been told the stories his entire life and ignores the teachers of his youth that tell him the stories are nothing. Tayo comes to realize through the course of the novel that the stories may be applied to his life, and that sometimes they require changes, that sometimes new ceremonies must be created. In contrast, Emo does not adhere to the old stories. He tells stories, but his are about his time in the war (World War II), including his conquests on and off the battlefield. Emo lives in his past and carries various trophies to remember. He has no intention of changing. With the guidance of the medicine man Betonie and Ts'eh, Tayo realizes that change is indeed necessary. Tayo realizes that he must complete a

ceremony to renew himself, and as he pursues this ceremony, he comes to understand that the ceremony is not only for himself, but his people. The renewal Tayo seeks is also the renewal his people need.

Tayo believes in the old stories. He understands that the stories are guides to navigating life and that they cross all barriers of time and space, “Distances and days existed in themselves then; they all had a story. They were not barriers. If a person wanted to get to the moon, there was a way; it all depended on whether you knew the directions—exactly which way to go and what to do to get there; it depended on whether you knew the story of how others before you had gone”(19). James Rupert agrees the stories are important and that they are reality:

It is the stories that grant order and form to the flow of events, and these stories codify meaning in such a way that the listener or reader can understand events in the world around him. Only when the reader understands the meaning of events can he act in an effective manner. But to do so, it is essential that the reader understands that the stories and reality in the novel are one. (78-85)

Tayo comes to realize that the stories are necessary to life and that change is also necessary. Most people, Indian and white, are frightened by change. Before he comes to accept this fact, he is told of the necessity of change by different characters. Josiah’s lover, The Night Swan, explains to Tayo that people like him and her are different and represent change. Because people fear this change, they fear them:

“They are afraid, Tayo. They feel something happening, they can see something happening around them, and it scares them. Indians or

Mexicans or whites—most people are afraid of change. They think that if their children have the same color of skin, the same color of eyes, that nothing is changing.” She laughed softly. “They are fools. They blame us, the ones who look different. That way they don’t have to think about what has happened inside themselves.” (99-100)

Those who are seemingly unchanging find easy scapegoats in people like Tayo and The Night Swan. They do not want to confront what is inside them, what is different, and as long as each generation of children looks just like the one before, then nothing appears to be changing. Tayo and others like him are visibly different and give the “unchanged” an outlet for their confusion and ignorance. She understands the power of change and sees Tayo’s potential, even though he himself does not yet see or understand, “You don’t have to understand what is happening. But remember this day. You will recognize it later. You are part of it now” (100). She has told him a story that explains change and fear, and now it is real as Tayo becomes part of the story.

Earlier in the novel, Tayo’s Grandma sends for a medicine man, old Ku’oosh, in hopes of helping Tayo, who is newly home from the war, sick and confused. There is a sense of history repeating itself as Ku’oosh speaks, “He spoke softly, using the old dialect full of sentences that were involuted with explanations of their own origins, as if nothing the old man said were his own but all had been said before and he was only there to repeat it” (34). The old medicine man does not change his ceremony and finds that doing things the way they have always been done is not helping the young men as it should, “There are some things we can’t cure like we used to . . . not since the white people came. The others who had the Scalp Ceremony, some of them are not better

either” (38). Although a sense of helplessness is found in Ku’oosh’s unchanging ways, he also gives Tayo a sense of responsibility as he carefully tells of the world and the interconnectedness of everything in it, “ ‘But you know, grandson, this world is fragile.’ The word he chose to express ‘fragile’ was filled with the intricacies of a continuing process, and with a strength inherent in spider webs woven across paths through sand hills where early in the morning the sun becomes entangled in each filament of web” (35). Ku’oosh gives Tayo a dual image of delicacy and strength. The world constantly changes, and therefore must be flexible, willing to bend, but difficult to break. It is ironic that Ku’oosh offers this image of the world as a changing entity. He continues with the same ceremonies without ever changing them, even realizing that they are not helping the way they once did. Later in the novel the medicine man Betonie addresses the changing world and the ceremonies:

“At one time, the ceremonies as they had been performed were enough for the way the world was then. But after the white people came, elements in this world began to shift; and it became necessary to create new ceremonies. I have made changes in the rituals. The people mistrust this greatly, but only this growth keeps the ceremonies strong.” (126)

Old Ku’oosh understands that the world is changing but will not change with it; he is the one to send Tayo to Betonie, perhaps realizing that the ceremony must be changed, but unable to do it himself. Both medicine men recognize the influence the coming of the white people has had upon the world, but while old Ku’oosh clings to the old ways, Betonie understands the necessity of flexibility to make the ceremonies effective, he himself being half-breed. The Night Swan explains to Tayo that people like themselves

represent change in a culture terrified of difference, so it makes perfect sense that the ceremonies must be altered to remain effective for those who are themselves an alteration. Rachel Stein comments that it falls upon those who are different to make the necessary changes in order to live in harmony with the world:

In Silko's fiction it is often people at the margins of tribal/dominant culture—people of mixed descent, or of mixed acculturation, those who bear the conflict between cultures in their own persons and who must inevitably negotiate the entanglement of competing cultures—who are driven to create new stories that reframe the relations of native culture and dominant white culture by reaffirming the reciprocal relation of humans to nature. (206)

Old Ku'oosh cannot change the ceremonies because he is not different, like Tayo, the Night Swan or Betonie, but he recognizes the need for change as well as those who must undertake the responsibility.

As Tayo later thinks about Ku'oosh's words, he begins to see the power within them, "The old man only made him certain of something he had feared all along, something in the old stories. It took only one person to tear away the delicate strands of the web, spilling the rays of sun into sand, and the fragile world would be injured" (38). Tayo later recalls Josiah telling him that all things are tied together:

"This is where we come from, see. This sand, this stone, these trees, the vines, all the wildflowers. This earth keeps us going . . . These dry years you hear some people complaining, you know, about the dust and the wind, and how dry it is. But the wind and the dust, they are part of life too,

like the sun and the sky. You don't swear at them. It's people, see.

They're the ones. The old people used to say that droughts happen when people forget, when people misbehave." (45-46)

Tayo believes this concept but feels he is to blame for bad things and can see no possible good. At the beginning of the novel, Tayo believes that the drought is entirely his fault due to his actions during the war. As a prisoner of war, Tayo helped carry his injured cousin Rocky. If the Japanese see them falter, they will kill Rocky. The relentless rain is too much for Tayo to handle as he struggles to keep from dropping his end of the blanket holding Rocky, "He damned the rain until the words were a chant, and he sang it while he crawled through the mud to find the corporal and get him up before the Japanese saw them. He wanted the words to make a cloudless blue sky, pale with a summer sun pressing across wide and empty horizons" (12). Silko juxtaposes Tayo's prayer with the story of Corn Woman and her sister, Iktoa'ak'o'ya-Reed Woman. When Corn Woman scolds her sister for bathing all day long while she works all day in the corn field, Iktoa'ak'o'ya-Reed Woman leaves, causing all things to dry up, including the plants and food (13). Rain is sensitive and can easily leave those who depend upon it. Louis Owens observes that Tayo and Corn Woman's mistakes are the same, "By introducing this Pueblo myth at this point in the novel, Silko implies that Tayo has committed the same error as Corn Woman: through partial vision he has failed to see the necessity for every thread in the web of the universe, even the maddening jungle rains. His vision is unbalanced and has immediate effect upon his environment" (99). Tayo knows his words have become reality as he views the land and animals around him, "So he had prayed the rain away, and for the sixth year it was dry;

the grass turned yellow and it did not grow. Wherever he looked, Tayo could see the consequences of his praying . . . he cried for all of them, and for what he had done” (14). Tayo is not yet able to embrace the dual nature of the rain; While the rain may be a nuisance, or even a hazard as Tayo struggles to hold onto Rocky, it also gives growth and life.

Another story Tayo temporarily forgets while he is in the jungle is one his uncle Josiah told him as a boy. Tayo creates a pile of dead flies and proudly shows them to his uncle. He has been told at school that the flies are “bad and carry sickness” (101). Josiah, unfamiliar with the school teachings, tells Tayo a different story:

“ . . . long time ago, way back in the time immemorial, the mother of the people got angry at them for the way they were behaving. For all she cared, they could go to hell—starve to death. The animals disappeared, and no rain came for a long time. It was the greenbottle fly who went to her, asking forgiveness for the people. Since that time the people have been grateful for what the fly did for us.” (101)

When Tayo worries about his actions, Josiah checks and assures him none of the dead flies are greenbottle flies. Josiah tells Tayo that the greenbottle fly originally came to help people who had made mistakes, and “Next time, just remember the story” (102). The fly intercedes on behalf of the faltering people, again illustrating that all things are connected, no matter how seemingly minuscule. In the jungle, though, the flies are as unbearable as the rain, “But in the jungle he had not been able to endure the flies that had crawled over Rocky; they had enraged him. He had cursed their sticky feet and wet mouths, and when he could reach them he had smashed them between his hands”

(102). Tayo places part of the blame for Rocky's death upon the flies; they are easily visible and easy for him to take his anger out on through brutally killing them. After returning from the war, Tayo remembers the story of the greenbottle fly and makes an effort to save flies at a café, "The ribbons were speckled with dead flies and a few that made feeble attempts to pull loose. He paid the old man and left, opening the screen door only enough to squeeze out and closing it quickly so that no flies got in" (101). His misplaced anger disappears when he is no longer involved in the war and distanced from the actions of white men.

After Tayo returns from the war, he turns his anger inward, transforming it into guilt. Tayo shoulders an enormous amount of guilt for the death of his cousin Rocky. He feels that he has failed everyone. While they were still in the jungle, he blames the rain and flies:

Tayo hated this unending rain as if it were the jungle green rain and not the miles of marching or the Japanese grenade that was killing Rocky. He would blame the rain if the Japs saw how the corporal staggered; if they saw how weak Rocky had become, and came to crush his head with the butt of a rifle, then it would be the rain and the green all around that killed him. (11)

The jungle and everything in it, in Tayo's rationalization, cause Rocky's death. When he leaves the war and must spend time in a Veteran's Hospital, Tayo loses consciousness and escapes the reality of Rocky's death:

For a long time he had been white smoke. He did not realize that until he left the hospital, because white smoke had no consciousness of itself. It

faded into the white world of their bed sheets and walls; it was sucked away by the words of doctors who tried to talk to the invisible scattered smoke . . . They saw his outline but they did not realize it was hollow inside. (14-15)

In the hospital, he has no form, no substance, and is not even a person, referring to himself as “it.” Looking back, he sees that the clueless doctors see him, but they cannot see what is inside him—nothing. For Tayo, becoming smoke is safe, “The smoke had been dense; visions and memories of the past did not penetrate there, and he had drifted in colors of smoke, where there was no pain . . . Their medicine drained memory out of his thin arms and replaced it with a twilight cloud behind his eyes” (15). Losing consciousness allows Tayo to leave pain and memory behind. The doctors keep him drugged, helping him to maintain a state of unconsciousness, a willing oblivion of all things around him. Only when a new doctor comes to see him and insists upon talking to him each day does Tayo’s safe world begin to crumble, “The new doctor asked him if he had ever been visible, and Tayo spoke softly and said that he was sorry but nobody was allowed to speak to an invisible one. But the new doctor persisted; he came each day, and his questions dissolved the edges of the fog, and his voice sounded louder every time he came” (15). He says earlier that the doctors “tried” to talk to him, to the smoke; this new doctor persists and breaks through to Tayo. He accepts that Tayo is invisible. Breaking through to Tayo signals, to the doctor, a level of health and he chooses to send Tayo home:

“It is easy to remain invisible here, isn’t it, Tayo?”

“It was, until you came. It was all white, all the color of the smoke, the

fog.”

“I am sending you home, Tayo; tomorrow you’ll go on the train.”

“He can’t go. He cries all the time. Sometimes he vomits when he cries.”

“Why does he cry, Tayo?”

“He cries because they are dead and everything is dying.”

He could see the doctor clearly then. (16)

Tayo breaks out of his unconsciousness and finds a new awareness of the world and himself. He begins to see himself as a person again, referring now to himself as “he.” Tayo has physical signs of awareness, crying and vomiting in reaction to the deaths of Rocky, his uncle Josiah, and the war in general. He may even realize at this point that his prayers for ending the rain and killing the flies have real consequences in this world, this life that exists outside of the jungle, separate from the war. Tayo fights this awakening and now curses the doctor for helping him achieve it:

He wanted to scream at the doctor then, but the words choked him and he coughed up his own tears and tasted their salt in his mouth. He smelled the disinfectant then, the urine and the vomit, and he gagged. He raised his head from the sink in the corner of the room; he gripped both sides and he looked up at the doctor.

“Goddamn you,” he cried softly. “Look what you have done.” (16)

Tayo’s awakening involves seeing himself as flesh and bone again, as well as an awareness of the world surrounding him. Sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch return to Tayo and overwhelm him. If the doctor had left him alone as all the other doctors had, he would have maintained his state of oblivion and solitude.

This new awareness continues to overtake Tayo as he waits at the train depot. His senses overwhelm him and Tayo keeps thinking that he will slip back into the smoke and fog of before:

. . . when his head was level with the ground he would be lost in smoke again, in the fog again. He breathed the air outside the doors and it smelled like trains, diesel oil, and creosote ties under the steel track. He leaned against the depot wall then; he was sweating, and sounds were becoming outlines again, vague and hollow in his ears, and he knew he was going to become invisible right there. (16)

Surrounded by Japanese women and children at the depot, he hears their words, first in English, then in Japanese, and he fears he is back at the prison camp:

He fought to come to the surface, and he expected a rifle barrel to be shoved into his face when he opened his eyes. It was all worse than he had ever dreamed: to have drifted all those months in white smoke, only to wake up again in the prison camp. But he did not want to be invisible when he died, so he pulled himself loose, one last time. (17)

Tayo finally achieves full consciousness, fighting to be aware, real and alive. While he still holds onto his guilt for Rocky and Josiah's deaths, he accepts that he is still alive and now fights to stay that way.

While coming into his new consciousness at the depot, surrounded by the Japanese women and children, Tayo notices a young Japanese boy in an oversized Army hat watching him and smiling at him as the group walks away. The boundaries of time and space begin to fade:

“Those people,” he said, pointing in the direction of the women and children had gone, “I thought they locked them up.”

“Oh, that was some years back. Right after Pearl Harbor. But now they’ve turned them all loose again. Sent them home. I don’t guess you could keep up with news very well in the hospital.” (18)

He realizes that time has been lost to him while he was smoke in the Veteran’s Hospital. He also becomes sick again. His new consciousness is coupled with sickness, a manifestation of his guilt. The sight of the young boy in the Army hat triggers the sickness and guilt, as well as the realization of the fluidity of time:

He could see the face of the little boy, looking back at him, smiling, and he tried to vomit the image from his head because it was Rocky’s smiling face from a long time before, when they were little kids together. He couldn’t vomit any more, and the little face was still there, so he cried at how the world had come undone, how thousands of miles, high ocean waves and green jungles could not hold people in their place. Years and months had become weak, and people could push against them and wander back and forth in time. Maybe it had always been this way and he was only seeing it for the first time. (18)

Tayo understands that time and distance are not obstacles and people are not held firmly in place. Later, his guilt for Rocky’s death leads him to again think about time and space, “It didn’t take Tayo long to see the accident of time and space: Rocky was the one who was alive, buying Grandma her heater with the round dial on the front; Rocky was there in the college game scores on the sports page of the *Albuquerque Journal*. It

was him, Tayo, who had died, but somehow there had been a mistake with corpses, and somehow his was still unburied” (28). If people cannot be held to one place, Tayo might have slipped through time at the wrong moment, causing Rocky to be the one to die instead of him.

Tayo’s guilt over Rocky’s death is compounded by Auntie, Rocky’s mother. Although the two boys grew up together and felt a brotherly bond toward each other, Auntie has always treated Tayo differently, “Since he could remember, he had known Auntie’s shame for what his mother had done, and Auntie’s shame for him” (57). Tayo, the son of a Laguna woman and a white father, is a half-breed in the eyes of the community, and it is with great sacrifice that Auntie raises him with her family, “She had always watched him more closely than Rocky, because Rocky had been her own son and it had been her duty to raise him. Those who measured life by counting the crosses would not count her sacrifices for Rocky the way they counted her sacrifices for her dead sister’s half-breed child” (30). Tayo is Auntie’s willing burden so that all will know she is a “Christian woman” (30). The idea of taking Tayo simply because he is her nephew and, for the most part, an orphan, is never considered. When Tayo arrives home, it is understood that Auntie shall care for him. As Edith Swan notes, “Rules of lineal descent give Auntie no choice about her obligation to raise the half-breed child of her dead sister since that child is viewed as hers—her son” (309-328). She finds a new reason to care for the half-breed nephew, “This time she would keep him because he was all she had left. Many years ago she had taken him to conceal the shame of her younger sister” (29). She sees the actions of other family members as being directly linked to her standing in the community, “She had fiercely protected them from the

gossip in the village. But she never let them forget what she had endured, all because of what they had done” (30). Auntie’s care for Tayo after his return from the hospital also shows her true feelings about him. When she comes to change his bed linens, she helps him out of the bed. Tayo moves toward the chair, but Auntie guides him to the other bed in the room, the bed that belonged to the now dead Rocky, “He wanted to pull out of her reach and go to the chair, but he was swaying with nausea. She pushed him into the bed and brought the slop jar” (30). Tayo is visibly disturbed by the action but unable to pull himself out of the bed, “He felt the old mattress then, where all the years of Rocky’s life had made contours and niches that Tayo’s bones did not fit: like plump satin-covered upholstery inside a coffin, molding itself around a corpse to hold it forever” (30-31). Tayo feels himself in the place of Rocky, in Rocky’s life and Rocky’s death at the same moment. Auntie’s action shows Tayo that she knows Tayo should have been killed instead of her son. Tayo feels guilty for his life, for not being in Rocky’s place. Later in the novel, Tayo’s vow to Auntie is revealed. Before they joined the Army, it was understood that Tayo would remain with his family, “The understanding had always been that Rocky would be the one to leave home, go to college or join the Army. But someone had to stay and help out with the garden and sheep camp” (72). Tayo feels guilt while Rocky is alive, before they leave for the Army. He has a familial duty, one that, traditionally, would have fallen upon Rocky. Tayo is Rocky’s replacement, and his understanding of Auntie’s feelings for him is evident the night before they leave and Tayo gives his word to Auntie, “I’ll bring him back safe,” Tayo said softly to her the night before they left. “You don’t have to worry.” She looked up from her Bible, and he could see that she was waiting for something to happen; but he knew that she always hoped,

that she always expected it to happen to him, not to Rocky (73). Because he is not going to fulfill his duty to stay with the family in Rocky's place, Tayo assures his aunt that he will watch over Rocky during their adventure in the Army. Auntie views this as an oath that Tayo will take Rocky's place in death, which would still give her respect from her people for raising the half-breed child. She would also be unburdened of Tayo if he should die in the War. Going home, going to Auntie's, causes him constantly to relive the pain and guilt, resulting in his constant sickness. As long as he remains in the room he and Rocky shared all those years, with the bed containing the contours of Rocky's life, Tayo will not heal. Even if he could somehow forget everything, Auntie will not let him.

While Tayo reacts to his guilt with illness and finds a reawakened consciousness, other Indian veterans choose the shortest path to oblivion. Emo and the others, on a regular basis, get drunk and tell stories about their conquests during the war, both on and off the battlefield. Tayo understands their reasons for drinking, and the misunderstanding of the older generation:

He had heard Auntie talk about the veterans—drunk all the time, she said. But he knew why. It was something the old people could not understand. Liquor was medicine for the anger that made them hurt, for the pain of the loss, medicine for tight bellies and choked-up throats. He was beginning to feel a comfortable place inside himself, close to his own beating heart, near his own warm belly; he crawled inside and watched the storm swirling on the outside and he was safe there; the winds of rage could not touch him. (40)

The veterans also drink for another reason, Tayo observes a short time later, "Belonging was drinking and laughing with the platoon, dancing with blonde women, buying drinks for buddies born in Cleveland, Ohio. Tayo knew what they had been trying to do" (43). For the majority of the Indian veterans, drinking helps them to escape the present and live in the time where they were "just one of the guys," a time when they all were accepted into the white man's world. Drinking is also medication for the veterans; this is especially true of Tayo. He understands that he never really belonged in the world the others so desperately try to experience one more time, so he has no need for attempts to reclaim it. For Tayo, his loss during the war is much too vivid, and at this point in the novel his only way to numb the ache is through drinking with the others. Ironically, by drinking with the others, it appears that he feels as they do, that he belongs with them, "They go on with it, with their good old times. Tayo starts crying. They think maybe he's crying about what the Japs did to Rocky because they are to that part of the ritual where they damn those yellow Jap bastards. Someone pats Tayo on the back. Harley wants to comfort him. They don't know he is crying for them" (43). Tayo sees that their ritual does them no true good and only serves to escape the present. Elizabeth N. Evasdaughter comments that Tayo is indeed different from the other veterans, and that perhaps he cares for them more than they will ever be capable of comprehending, "Tayo sometimes goes drinking with these defiant veterans, but what he defies is the blackness in their hearts, what he regrets is their spiritual death" (83-94). Tayo wants the numbness the alcohol brings, but he knows that he never was truly accepted, and neither were they.

This escapist drinking takes another turn as Emo sits and tells his stories. Emo

has a ritual to telling his stories and doesn't falter from it, "Emo rattled the Bull Durham sack. He bounced it in the palm of one hand and then the other; he took another swallow of whiskey. He had to have two or three swallows of whiskey before he'd talk; he took out the little cloth sack when he was ready" (55). He begins by cursing the land, "...us Indians deserve something better than this goddamn dried-up country around here. Blowing away, every day.' He laughed at the rhyme he made. The other guys laughed too because Emo was mean when he was drunk" (55). Earlier, Josiah tells Tayo about people complaining about the drought, the dust, and the wind. The real fault, though, is upon the people because "droughts happen when people forget, when people misbehave" (45-46). Josiah's words are followed by the story of the twin brothers, Ma'see'wi and Ou'yu'ye'wi, and how they are fooled by the magic of Pa'caya'nyi. The people become so enchanted with the magic that they neglect the mother corn altar, believing that the magic "could give life to plants and animals./ They didn't know it was all just a trick" (47-48). The mother, Nau'ts'ity'i, is outraged at the neglect and ignorance and takes everything away:

So she took
the plants and grass from them.
No baby animals were born.
She took the
rainclouds with her. (48-49)

Tayo is the only one present who still believes in the old ways, the old stories. Although Tayo understands their reasons for drinking, he doesn't like Emo's stories, told as his fellow vets drown hopelessness with beer and liquor, bragging about less than

honorable victories. It is also apparent to Tayo that Emo is the ringleader of this disguised misery. He begins the stories, and the others laugh when he does, fearing the repercussions if they don't. Emo works his audience into a drunken frenzy as he reminds them of what they don't have and what whites do have. As Emo tells his stories of sexual conquests of white women during the war, Tayo grows more and more ill. One of Emo's stories, though, makes him uncomfortable, especially because someone else tells it for him. A woman he is with discovers he is an Indian and faints, "There was something about the story Emo didn't like" (60). With his discomfort Emo turns his attention to Tayo and tries to insult him, "You don't like my stories, do you? Not good enough for you, huh? You think you're hot shit, like your cousin. Big football star. Big hero...One thing you can do is drink like an Indian, can't you? Maybe you aren't no better than the rest of us, huh?"(60). Emo's words don't have the intended effect. Instead of wounding Tayo, they show him that Emo is jealous, "Tayo thought of Rocky then, and he was proud that Emo was so envious. The beer kept him loose inside. Emo's words never touched him. The beer stroked a place deep under his heart and put all the feeling to sleep." (60). Tayo drinks like the others, but he remains conscious and aware. Drinking helps Tayo to be numb to anger and Emo's spiteful words as he watches the storm from a safe place. Emo, though, must recover his audience and returns to his war trophy, the little bag of human teeth, "They were his war souvenirs, the teeth he had knocked out of the corpse of a Japanese soldier. The night progressed according to that ritual: from cursing the barren dry land the white man had left them, to talking about San Diego and the cities where the white women were still waiting for them to come back...But in the end, they always came around to it" (61). Emo enjoys

his ritual and enjoys telling of how he killed, “Tayo could hear it in his voice when he talked about the killing—how Emo grew from each killing. Emo fed off each man he killed, and the higher the rank of the dead man, the higher it made Emo” (61). Emo thrives on evil and grows with each evil act he commits.

The stories and rituals of Emo are too much for Tayo to take silently. Tayo attacks Emo and briefly believes his recovery is in sight, “He got stronger with every jerk that Emo made, and he felt that he would get well if he killed him” (63). When a doctor suggests that “a pattern of drinking and violence...is emerging among Indian veterans,” Tayo knows something greater is happening:

“It’s more than that. I can feel it. It’s been going on for a long time.”

“What do you think it is?”

“I don’t know what it is, but I can feel it all around me.”

“Is that why you tried to kill Emo?”

“Emo was asking for it.” (53)

Emo “asks for it” in multiple ways. He is fascinated with evil and grows from it, something that triggers a physical reaction in Tayo, “Every word Emo said pulled the knot in his belly tighter” (62). Reed Way Dasenbrock observes that Emo is “the real half-breed, poisoned by the white ways” (73). This is obvious as Emo finishes his story with thoughts of total annihilation, ““We blew them all to hell. We should’ve dropped bombs on all the rest and blown them off the face of the earth”” (61). This image of dropping bombs on a civilization triggers a memory of Tayo’s, one of destroying melons in an old man’s field. He details the sound of stomping one with his foot, “It made a popping sound. Seeds and wet pulp squirted out from the broken rind; they glistened

with juice” (61). He then takes a melon and raises it above his head, an image similar to Emo’s image of dropping bombs, “ He raised it high over his head and smashed it to the ground. He made certain they were all gone” (61-62). Even the ants scurrying over the remains find no mercy as he stomps them, leaving the flies to “buzz in circles above the burial places” (62). This memory triggers another for Tayo, one not explicitly mentioned, but implied. When Rocky is killed by the Japanese soldier, Tayo screams and drowns out the sound of the rifle butt slamming into Rocky’s blanket. He doesn’t hear the actual sound and later searches for it, “...he regretted that he had not listened, because it became an uncertainty, loose inside his head, wandering into his imagination, so that any hollow crushing sound he heard—children smashing gourds along the irrigation ditch...— any of these sounds took him back to that moment” (44). Emo unwittingly gains access to the single most painful event in Tayo’s life, sending him through the boundaries of time and space back to a moment when he is powerless to intervene. Before Tayo attacks, Emo continues to play with the teeth, causing Tayo to once again see the young Japanese boy he saw at the station when he was first released, the same boy whose face becomes Rocky’s, “It was too late then. It tore loose. The little Japanese boy was smiling in the L.A. depot; darkness came like night fog and someone was bending over a small body” (62). With his newfound consciousness, Tayo is aware of the fluctuations of time, space, and all boundaries. He has no hatred, though, when he attacks, “He should have hated Emo; he should have hated the Jap soldiers who killed Rocky. The space to carry hate was located deep inside, below his lungs and behind his belly; but it was empty...He didn’t feel anything” (63). He is beyond feeling any rage or anger; Tayo only feels that Emo deserves this

and something must be done. What the Night Swan told Tayo before he joined the Army and went to the War is coming to fruition, “You don’t have to understand what is happening. But remember this day. You will recognize it later. You are part of it now” (100). While Emo turns away from his culture, it is Tayo who “turns or returns to his native tradition” (Dasenbrock 73). Tayo is now part of the story.

Tayo actually tells a drinking story of his own, but not the usual. In contrast to Emo’s story, Tayo’s story focuses on the difference the uniform made, and how once it was gone, so was the fleeting equality it brought the Indians:

“One time there were these, Indians, see. They put on uniforms, cut their hair. They went off to a big war. They had a real good time too. Bars served them booze, old white ladies on the street smiled at them. At Indians, remember that, because that’s all they were. Indians. These Indians fucked white women, they had as much as they wanted too. They were MacArthur’s boys;...These Indians got treated the same as anyone: Wake Island, Iwo Jima. They got the same medals for bravery, the same flag over the coffin...See these dumb Indians thought these good times would last. They didn’t ever want to give up the cold beer and the blond cunt. Hell no!...They had the uniform and they didn’t look different no more. They got respect.” (42)

Tayo tells of the Indian conquests of white women, just as Emo does. However, Tayo’s version acknowledges the blindness of the Indians and the assumption that the newfound glory and respect the uniform brings will last forever. He then points out all the changes since returning from the war, when the uniform is gone:

“You knew right away. The war was over, the uniform was gone. All of a sudden that man at the store waits on you last, makes you wait until all the white people bought what they wanted. And the white lady at the bus depot, she’s real careful now not to touch your hand when she counts out your change. You watch it slide across the counter at you, and you know. Goddamn it! You stupid sonofabitches! You know!” (42)

Tayo views the change as instantaneous and obvious. To Tayo, they are only fooling themselves and ignoring the real story. He tries to make them more aware than they want to be and they do not like it, “They never thought to blame white people for any of it; they wanted white people for their friends. They never saw that it was the white people who gave them that feeling and it was white people who took it away again when the war was over” (43). Although Tayo has found consciousness, the rest are not searching; instead, they prefer to live in the old feelings of the past, finding comfort in a time that was kind to them. A short time later in the novel the story of the twins fooled by the magic of Pa’caya’nyi appears. Elaine Jahner, speaking of these foolish veterans, observes that “they accept quick solutions, quick magic, but they cannot perceive the right relationships and boundaries” (46). Alcohol is a quick fix for the veterans, a quick way to escape. The war veterans foolishly believe they are equal to whites and never see that whites take away this equality when the war ends.

Later Tayo talks to Betonie the medicine man about Emo, “. . . he says the Indians have nothing compared to white people. He talks about their cities and all the machines and food they have. He says the land is no good, and we must go after what they have, and take it from them...I wonder what good Indian ceremonies can do

against the sickness which comes from their wars, their bombs, their lies?” (132). Tayo begins to question the old ways in the face of such harsh evidence, but Betonie explains something that makes everything clear to Tayo. Betonie tells Tayo the story of the witches and their contest:

Long time ago
in the beginning
there were no white people in this world
there was nothing European.
And this world might have gone on like that
except for one thing:
witchery. (132-133)

The world is complete and without white people until the witches gather and have a “contest in dark things” (133). After most of the witches show off their skills, one is left. This one tells a story of people across the ocean in caves, people who see “no life,” and see “only objects.” These people contain a great fear and arm themselves, killing all they fear; Eventually, they will come and destroy the world (135-138). The witch who tells this story wins the contest, but the others agree that the story is a horrible one, asking the witch to “ ‘Take it back. Call that story back’ “ (138). It is already known that stories are reality; therefore, the witch cannot take it back, “*It’s already turned loose./ It’s already coming. / It can’t be called back*” (138). The white people originate from the words of witchery; They are Indian creations. To want to be like the white people is to become a tool of the witchery. Tayo sees this in Emo and sees Emo falling into the trap of the witchery. Coming to this realization also brings an enormous peace to Tayo.

Earlier in the novel, he has the feeling that something bigger than the immediate world and the present is taking place. Betonie's words and story confirm this for Tayo, bringing his world into focus and allowing him to see what lies beyond his pain and guilt:

He could see no signs of what had been set loose upon the world: the highways, the towns, even the fences were gone. This was the highest point on the earth: he could feel it. It had nothing to do with measurements or height. It was a special place. He was smiling. He felt strong. He had to touch his own hand to remember what year it was: thick welted scars from the shattered bottle glass. (139)

As he looks around at the plateaus and canyons surrounding him, Tayo sees no signs of the witchery that has divided the world, just as the roads and fences divide the land. The land is whole and complete, and Tayo draws strength from its unity. As he brings himself back to the present, he touches a tangible reminder of the effects of witchery, foreshadowing something larger and unfinished between himself and Emo.

Tayo's return from World War II signals his reawakening into a new consciousness. While the other Indian veterans deal with the war and its aftermath through drinking and stories of conquest on and off the battlefield, Tayo struggles with sickness and understanding his new awareness. Things told to him before the war come back to him and help him make sense of his confusing world. His Uncle Josiah's stories and the Night Swan's words come back to Tayo. Although he does not understand everything that is happening to him, he realizes the importance of their stories and words. Tayo has known all his life that he is different, and only now does he perceive the difference to be of importance and possible value. He begins to

understand that he is part of a greater thing, and that people like Emo want something different from the world than he does, something unadmirable and connected to the ancient witchery. Tayo struggles with flashbacks throughout the first half of the novel, fighting his guilt for Rocky's death during the war. Betonie helps Tayo realize the necessity of change in order to function in the ever changing world. He also helps Tayo to focus his energy and understand the stories, telling him of the nature of the white people and the part witchery played in their creation. With Betonie's guidance, Tayo begins to grow strong and realize his true place in the world. Using the stories, Tayo will negotiate his way through the future.

CHAPTER 2:

TS'EH:

ACCEPTANCE WITHOUT QUESTION

During his time with Ts'eh, Tayo finds love, acceptance, encouragement, and strength. After one night with her, Tayo begins to remember the old ways more clearly, reconnecting with the Tayo who existed before the war. He is continually reminded of the old ways and old times, from Ts'eh's hairstyle that mimics that of the old women to thoughts of his horse's connection to a wilder, ancient breed. Before the war, Tayo appreciated the old ways and his grandmother's tales. He saw meaning in them and was learning to incorporate them into his own life. With the war came the influence of the witchery, causing Tayo to lose his vision of the importance of the past and the past's importance in his life. Betonie gave Tayo a map leading to his former self, but Ts'eh helps him to negotiate the curves and turns of the roadway to an improved vision of the old Tayo. With Ts'eh's guidance and gentle wisdom, Tayo rediscovers himself and realizes that witchery may indeed be overcome. By the end of the novel, Tayo finds hope not just for himself, but for an entire tribe.

Several episodes show that Tayo, before the war, attempted to adhere to the old ways and respected the stories. His grandmother always told him stories from "time immemorial," and he remembers them. Before the war, Tayo goes to pray during a dry summer. He mimics the ways of the priests and heads south with his horse before sunrise. After tying the mare to a tree at the mouth of the canyon, Tayo walks a trail into the canyon, picking flowers growing along the path, "flowers with yellow long petals

the color of the sunlight” (93-4). When he reaches the pool in the canyon, he takes the flowers and shakes “the pollen from them gently, ” sprinkling it over the water. He performs his ritual as he feels, in his heart, it should be performed. As he waits, he senses the recession of the dust and heat, a distancing from the deprived crops, and a damp smell in the air. The first creature to emerge and drink is the spider:

The spider came first. She drank from the edge of the pool, careful to keep the delicate egg sacs on her abdomen out of the water. She retraced her path, leaving faint crisscrossing patterns in the fine yellow sand. He remembered stories about her. She waited in certain locations for people to come to her for help. . . He knew what white people thought about the stories. In school the science teacher had explained what superstition was, and then held the science textbook up for the class to see the true source of explanations. He had studied those books, and he had no reasons to believe the stories any more. (94)

While the science books provide simplistic reasons that explain away the “superstitions” of his people, Tayo still believes his grandmother’s stories:

But old Grandma always used to say, “Back in time immemorial, things were different, the animals could talk to human beings and many magical things still happened.” He never lost the feeling he had in his chest when she spoke those words, as she did each time she told them stories; and he still felt it was true, despite all they had taught him in school—that long long ago things *had* been different, and human beings could understand what the animals said, and once the Gambler had trapped the storm

clouds on his mountaintop. (94-5)

Regardless of the efforts of past teachers, Tayo maintains a belief in the old stories and ways. While, thanks to his early education, he has no reason to believe, Tayo feels the importance of the stories and, while he may not completely understand on a conscious level, he understands subconsciously. Josiah told him that praying “should be something he felt inside himself,” and he did what he felt to be right when he went to the canyon to pray (93). Tayo holds within himself the tools to a stronger self, even though he may not understand how to use every one of them.

When the war comes, Tayo’s beliefs are challenged and he loses sight of the Tayo who believes the stories and understands their importance to his life. Tayo finds himself overwhelmed by the multiple changes the war brings into his world and finds difficulty functioning in a post-war world. While Betonie helps Tayo to realize his importance in the world and the necessity of change, Tayo needs additional guidance along his path. Just as the spider awaits those in need of her help, Tayo finds Ts’eh when he needs her most. While looking for Josiah’s lost cattle, Tayo discovers Ts’eh standing under an apricot tree. She is familiar to him, from her old fashioned hair to her face, “She wasn’t much older than he was, but she wore her hair long, like the old women did, pinned back in a knot ... Her eyes were slanted up with her cheekbones like the face of an antelope dancer’s mask” (177). She invites him into her house, giving him warmth and nourishment. As she stands by the window, she points out to Tayo the clear sky and visible stars. He goes outside to look up and find Betonie’s pattern of stars in the sky (178). While the ceremony began with Betonie, it continues with Ts’eh, and the pattern of stars in the sky is an integral part of Tayo’s ceremony,

“One night or nine nights won’t do it any more,” the medicine man said; “the ceremony isn’t finished yet.” He was drawing in the dirt with his finger. “Remember these stars,” he said. “I’ve seen them and I’ve seen the spotted cattle; I’ve seen a mountain and I’ve seen a woman.” (152) The story is becoming real and visible to Tayo. From the stars in the sky to Ts’eh’s physical presence Tayo grows stronger in his understanding of himself and the ceremony. He finds nourishment both in the food Ts’eh provides and her caress, finding that after one night with her he is more aware of nature and the fact that all things are interconnected through delicate, yet strong and flexible threads reminiscent of the spider’s web. He greets the sunrise with joy and celebration, remembering a song praising the sunrise:

He repeated the words as he remembered them, not sure if they were the right ones, but feeling they were right, feeling the instant of the dawn was an event which in a single moment gathered all things together—the last stars, the mountaintops, the clouds, and the winds—celebrating this coming. The power of each day spilled over the hills in great silence. (182)

Tayo begins to reconnect with a lost part of himself, one which existed before the war, and the changes the war brought to his life. He is learning to weather the changes in his life and his world. Just as he prayed in the canyon, doing what felt right inside, Tayo again relies upon a subconscious understanding of the world. Ts’eh’s sensuality brings Tayo awareness, helping him to renew his connection to the world around him, first through the physical intimacy they share and then to the dawning world; sunrise brings more than a new day for Tayo, it brings a new life.

Tayo’s new vision also brings re-vision to the interconnectedness old Ku’oosh

spoke of earlier. As Tayo watches the mare graze, she pauses, leading Tayo to sense the penetrability of time, "Maybe the dawn woke the instinct in the dim memory of the blood when horses had been as wild as the deer and at sunrise went into the trees and thickets to hide" (182-183). Dawn provides a new day and an awakening to the truths held within, whether it is the mare's possible brief awareness of a wilder breed or Tayo's remembrance of himself. Time has no relevance, and while this fact brought Tayo pain and suffering in the past, he now understands and accepts the reality. Tayo again sees this when he wonders about the age of the house, "He tried to determine when it had been built, but except for the sagging screen all around the long porch, the house was like the mesas around it: years had little relation to it" (183). Time does not hold people, animals, or things firmly in place; instead, it allows them to move, constantly shifting and changing as necessary.

Later in the novel after Tayo finds the cattle, he once again finds Ts'eh when he needs her. Although he is discovered by white ranchers, the cattle and his mare escape. Ts'eh captures the cattle using ingenuity and the natural landscape, "They went just like the run-off goes after a rainstorm, running right down the middle of the arroyo into the trap. That's why it's there. Livestock come down off the mountain that way. All I had to do was go down and close the gate behind them" (210). Tayo examines the construction of the trap, noting the simplicity:

The people had made such traps for a long time because they were easy to build and because they enable one or two people alone to corral many horses or cattle. The trap took advantage of the way horses and cattle, once they had been driven into a dry arroyo bed, would usually continue

following the course of the arroyo because the sides of the banks were steep and difficult to escape; they could be driven deep into an arroyo that way until the banks were fifteen or twenty feet high, making it impossible for horses or cattle to escape. (210-211)

The trap is more than a natural convenience; it illustrates another difference between Indians and whites. Whites use crude, ugly barbed wire, stringing it across the mountains in an effort to contain the land as well as the animals. Indians use the resources of the land, making sure not to harm the land in the process. When Ts'eh fearlessly inspects the cattle, Tayo follows warily, "He didn't like being on foot in the corral with them, because he suspected that human beings mattered little to them, and it was only the size of the horse, not the rider, which they respected. But the woman was not afraid" (211-212). The key word is "human"; while Tayo is very much human, Ts'eh is not. She possesses a human form, but her existence goes beyond human capabilities as she shows no fear and seems to understand without benefit of spoken words. When Tayo expresses concern that the thieves will come for the cattle, he glimpses Ts'eh's strength and power in a single glance:

"I wonder if they'll come looking for the cattle?"

She shrugged her shoulders, unconcerned.

"They won't come down here," she said.

"Why not?"

She gave him a look that chilled him. She must have seen his fear because she smiled and said, "Because of all the snow up there. What else?" She was teasing him again. He shook his head. (213)

As a human, Tayo vocalizes a human concern. The white ranchers are irrelevant to Ts'eh; therefore, she has no concern regarding them. When he persists, her look tells Tayo there is something more about her, something beyond what he sees and feels, something strong and powerful which has no reason to fear the cattle or the thieves. When she realizes his discomfort, she provides him with a reason his human mind can comprehend, teasing him to lighten the suddenly heavy atmosphere surrounding them.

When Tayo returns with Robert to retrieve the cattle, he finds Ts'eh gone, but the cattle in the corral and well-fed, “ ‘They look real good, Tayo,’ Robert said. ‘Somebody’s been looking after them for you’ ” (215). While Ts'eh may not be there physically at that moment in time, it is obvious she continues to provide Tayo with help when he needs her. Her importance in his life and Betonie’s vision of her is reinforced by the presence of an old war shield in the house. As Tayo enters the now empty house, he finds another physical representation of Betonie’s stars in the form of “an old war shield” suspended on the wall, something he does not recall being there before, “There were small white spots of paint all over the shield. He stepped back: it was a star map of the overhead sky in late September. It was the Big Star constellation old Betonie had drawn in the sand” (214). Her entrance into his life becomes more than coincidental and her presence is constant. When he returns home, he finds her in his dreams, “He dreamed with her, dreams that lasted all night, dreams full of warm deep caressing and lingering desire which left him sleeping peacefully until dawn, when he would wake up at the first dim light with her presence and the feeling that she had been with him all night” (215). Ts'eh gives Tayo the strength to rediscover the Tayo who existed before the war, one who appreciates the world around him. After spending the

night with Ts'eh, Tayo continues to feel her with him as he rises early for a walk before dawn, “. . . on these mornings when he buttoned up his jacket and went out the door, he imagined she was watching him. . . ‘Sunrise, sunrise.’ His words made vapor in the cold morning, and he felt he was living with her this way” (215-216). He continues to find strength from her, in return building his own strength and reconnecting with the world he lives in. She remains in his dreams while he is away from her and he is reminded of her by the very earth he is learning once again to respect:

He was dreaming of her arms around him strong, when the rain on the tin roof woke him up. But the feeling he had, the love he felt from her, remained. The wet earth smell came in the window that Robert had propped open with an old shoe the night before. He was overwhelmed by the love he felt for her; tears filled his eyes and the ache in his throat ran deep into his chest. He ran down the hill to the river, through the light rain until the pain faded like a fog mist. He stood and watched the rainy dawn, and he knew he would find her again. (217-218)

Tayo feels more than his love for Ts'eh; he feels love from Ts'eh. She gives him strength, acceptance, and hope, for himself and the world. Louis Owens states that “with his love for Ts'eh comes wholeness and health for Tayo,” but it is more than his love for Ts'eh that leads Tayo to “wholeness” (110). While Tayo's love for Ts'eh is most definitely an important part of his ceremony, it requires the reciprocity of Ts'eh's love for him. As Robert M Nelson observes, Tayo's healing process “depends on reanchoring his own spirit in the land and in the love he brings to, and receives from, Ts'eh” (160-161). His love for her is only a part that must be combined with Betonie's guidance,

Tayo's learning to find strength within himself and Ts'eh's love for Tayo. The ceremony is incomplete without all these parts working together.

When Tayo chooses to return to the ranch, he continues to find signs of newness in the world and proof of life and growth. While earlier in the novel he is only capable of seeing dryness and the death of the world around him, he now sees a new world being born:

The valley was green, from the yellow sandstone mesas in the northwest to the black lava hills to the south. But it was not the green color of the jungles, suffocating and strangling the earth. The new growth covered the earth lightly, each blade of grass, each leaf and stem with space between as if planted by a thin summer wind. There were no dusty red winds spinning across the flats this year. (219)

As Tayo sees the rebirth of the world, he sees that things that existed before still exist, only now he associates new thoughts with them, "The changes pulled against themselves inside him...But his room was the same, the creaking bedsprings and frame pushed into the southeast corner below the small window. The terror of the dreaming he had done on this bed was gone, uprooted from his belly; and the woman had filled the hollow spaces with new dreams" (219). Ts'eh helps transform Tayo's dreams into ones of hope and love. Tayo begins to see the power of Ts'eh's love, and in turn the power of love on the world. With this power, Tayo realizes that he has not lost anyone:

The dreams had been terror at loss, at something lost forever; but nothing was lost; all was retained between the sky and the earth, and within himself. He had lost nothing. The snow-covered mountain remained,

without regard to titles of ownership or the white ranchers who thought they possessed it. They logged the trees, they killed the deer, bear, and mountain lions, they built their fences high; but the mountain was far greater than any or all of these things. (219)

Tayo realizes that everything is within him and that it cannot be taken away by anyone. The white ranchers may believe they own the mountain because they affect everything on it, but the mountain is beyond their ownership, just as Tayo's love is strong enough not to be lost:

The mountain outdistanced their destruction, just as love outdistanced death. The mountain could not be lost to them, because it was in their bones; Josiah and Rocky were not far away. They were close; they had always been close. And he loved them as he had always loved them, the feeling pulsing over him as strong as it had ever been. They loved him that way; he could still feel the love they had for him. The damage that had been done had never reached this feeling. This feeling was their life, vitality locked deep in blood memory, and the people were strong, and the fifth world endured, and nothing was ever lost as long as the love remained. (219-220)

Tayo has lost no one and nothing; his love for Josiah and Rocky endures. Just as Tayo understands that his love for Ts'eh is reciprocated, he feels the love of Josiah and Rocky as well. It is not enough to exist in the world and love those surrounding him and the world around him; Tayo feels the wholeness that can only come from the mutual love of those in his life.

With each new discovery, Tayo finds himself becoming more closely connected with the earth. Through his intimate relationship with Ts'eh, Tayo feels himself becoming one with her and the earth, both physically and mentally. Old Ku'oosh's words again show the shape and magnitude of the world and Tayo's actions in the world; Everything is connected. When he is alone, he maintains this connection to the world, replicating Ts'eh's collection of necessary elements to maintain the world's balance, imitating "the gentleness of the bees" as he gathers pollen from the flowers (220). As he continues up a trail, Tayo sees beauty all around him, and observes the appearance of a snake which stops briefly when it finds Tayo. He honors the snake's appearance and is blessed by the beauty of the world:

He knelt over the arching tracks the snake left in the sand and filled the delicate imprints with yellow pollen. As far as he could see, in all directions, the world was alive. He could feel the motion pushing out of the damp earth into the sunshine—the yellow spotted snake the first to emerge, carrying this message on his back to the people. (221)

These actions reaffirm the vitality of the world. His dreams and his reality intermingle, showing that being with her also confirms the connection with the earth she helps him reestablish, "He dreamed he made love with her there. He felt the warm sand on his toes and knees; he felt her body, and it was as warm as the sand, and he couldn't feel where her body ended and the sand began" (222). Even when Tayo wakes, finding Ts'eh gone and his hands full of sand, he maintains his connections to her and the earth, "He washed his face in the water; the surface water was still warm, so he plunged his hands deep into the cool layer above the yellow sand. . . He had not

dreamed her; she was there as certainly as the sparrows had been there, leaving spindly scratches in the mud” (222). Tayo’s connection to Ts’eh, and in turn his connection to the world, show that indeed all things are connected. He has imitated Ts’eh’s actions of gathering and distributing the pollen and such things in an effort to give something back to the world, a measure of care that has been neglected by the whites. She has taught him about these things along the way:

“He went with her to learn about the roots and plants she had gathered. When she found a place she got comfortable, spreading her blue shawl on the ground after she had cleared the area of pebbles and little sticks and made sure no ants were disturbed. She sat flat on the ground and bent close to the plants, examining them for a long time, from the petals, sprinkled with pollen, down the stem to each leaf, and finally to the base, where she carefully dug the sand away from the roots.” (224)

Ts’eh’s actions show her gentleness and concern for the world and everything in it. She is careful in her actions, making sure not to harm the tiniest creatures. The glimpse of her power, strength, and bravery earlier when she and Tayo discuss her indifference to the white ranchers and their possible return is balanced with her gentle nature when regarding innocent creations and creatures.

As Tayo learns to accept his place and importance in the world, he also realizes, with the help of Ts’eh, what is not important in the world. He already understands that she loves him and accepts him. This automatic and unwavering acceptance has been unfamiliar to Tayo. He has felt the disappointment of Auntie nearly his whole life, and even with his steps toward recovery, Auntie has been waiting for Tayo to return to his

former state of disrepair, skeptical of his ability to find a way out of his depression and confusion as well as skeptical of the Indian cures his Grandmother believes in and pushes Tayo to explore. Tayo also realizes that his nearly lifelong worry regarding Auntie's disapproval of him, his mother, and nearly everything and everyone around her is of no importance in the world, " 'Up here, we don't have to worry about those things.' She was right. They would leave the questions of lineage, clan, and family dame to the people in the village, to someone like Auntie who had to know everything about anyone." (223). Tayo finally sees that it just does not matter, to himself, to Ts'eh, nor to the world.

Tayo has thrived with the love of Ts'eh. He understands that she is something more than a mere mortal, and their observation of the she-elk painting on the sandstone reinforces her mysterious identity:

The she-elk was bigger than life, painted in pale lavender clay on the south face of sandstone, along the base of the cliff. Her great belly was swollen with new life as she leaped across the yellow sandrock, startled forever across the curve of cliff rock, ears flung back to catch a sound behind her. The priests who painted her each year always cried when they stood back from the cliff and saw her. "A'moo'oooh! A'moo'oooh! you are so beautiful! You carry all that life! A'moo'oooh! With you, the cliff comes alive" (230)

This vision of beauty and praise is juxtaposed with the vision of neglect the she-elk has endured. Although the literal image of the she-elk fades, Ts'eh reinforces the importance of the story to life as she and Tayo replace the fallen stones, "The clay is

washing away,” she said. “Nobody has come to paint it since the war. But as long as you remember what you have seen, then nothing is gone. As long as you remember, it is part of this story we have together“ (231). Tayo has earlier learned the importance of the story from his grandmother, although he has seen the negative impact one may have; Tayo’s grandmother has insisted that the story is everything and is quite sure that any gossip about her family can be overcome as long as her story is better, “The story was all that counted. If she had a better one about them, then it didn’t matter what they said” (89). Ts’eh reinforces this belief, but in this case it is something beautiful and powerful that the story represents. The story is a dual entity; it may possess beauty and goodness or evil and destruction. If the story is that of goodness and remains in the memory, then it prevails. Correspondingly, if all that exists in the memory is the story of evil, then the evil of the witchery in the world prevails, condemning the world to devastation. The witchery’s hand in World War II has resulted in the neglect of the old ways, such as the she-elk painting. Although these ways have been neglected, they are not extinct, and as long as they remain in the memory, as long as the stories remain, they continue to exist.

Ts’eh offers Tayo love and acceptance that does not depend upon his background; she only cares about Tayo and what is inside him. Tayo finds his way back to the old ways, some of which he practiced and respected before the war. She helps him find the old Tayo, but he does not revert to what he was before; instead, he becomes renewed, merging the old appreciation with a new understanding, finding a Tayo that sees in full detail the world around him, one who is capable of facing whatever may occur in this world, thanks to Betonie’s guidance and Ts’eh’s love. He

now sees the witchery for what it is, as well as the one thing more powerful than the witchery: love that knows no boundaries of time or space, love for Josiah and Rocky that is never-ending, as well as the unconditional love of the mysterious Ts'eh. He also understands that the story is indeed important. With all he has learned from Betonie and Ts'eh, Tayo can face the end of his ceremony.

CHAPTER 3: THE SEARCH FOR THE SPECKLED CATTLE

Tayo's search for his uncle Josiah's cattle is an integral part of the ceremony, transcending time and requiring Tayo to accept help from other realms. The search also lead Tayo to discover within himself beliefs rooted in his childhood, beliefs that go beyond questioning and doubting the stories and ways of his people: questioning and doubting the people themselves. When he is troubled by the concept of a white man stealing the cattle, he realizes how easily he has grown up accepting the idea that whites never steal and only those with colored skin do. The implantation of this lie may potentially destroy an entire culture from the inside out, eating away trust and loyalty until nothing remains. By realizing the truth, Tayo is able to relinquish his self-doubt and focus on the importance of his search and the ceremony, taking a beginning step to the realization that witchery must be opposed with knowledge and hope instead of hatred and violence.

After he is renewed by his initial experience with Ts'eh, Tayo resumes his search for Josiah's cattle. While he has been uncertain of Betonie's accuracy, he begins to have faith in the medicine man's visions, "So he had gone, not expecting to find anything more than the winter constellation in the north sky overhead; but suddenly Betonie's vision was a story he could feel happening—from the stars and the woman, the mountain and the cattle would come"(186). He finds hope and purpose in his life, and because part of Betonie's vision has come to fruition, he feels confident that the rest will come as well. Finding the cattle means continuation, giving life to Josiah's

plans, “He got up feeling happy and excited. He would take the cattle home again, and they would follow the plans Josiah had made and raise a new breed of cattle that could live in spite of drought and hard weather” (187). Josiah remains real and alive to Tayo as long as he remembers him, and giving life to his plans is a physical representation of Tayo’s remembrance. Josiah even helps Tayo in his search for the cattle, guiding him through Tayo’s memories:

Josiah taught him to watch for loose strands of wire and breaks in the fence; he taught Tayo how to mend them before any livestock strayed off reservation land. He helped Tayo stitch a leather holster for the pliers one evening after supper, and he reminded him that you never know when you might be traveling some place and a fence might get in your way. (188-189)

Even though Tayo has spotted the cattle, he has trouble accepting that they have been stolen because they are on land “owned” by a white man. He realizes that he has learned more than scientific explanations for the stories and beliefs; he has learned to doubt and suspect anyone not white, and while he has successfully moved beyond scientific knowledge, Tayo finds it difficult to challenge the ingrained belief that whites are superior, “He knew then he had learned the lie by heart—the lie which they had wanted him to learn: only brown-skinned people were thieves; white people didn’t steal, because they always had the money to buy whatever they wanted” (191). While doubting and disregarding the beliefs of his culture was the surface agenda of teachers in his youth, Tayo now realizes the underlying agenda, the one that attempts to breed hate and mistrust in an entire culture. Destroying the belief in the old ways cuts the

connection between the past, the present and the future, but breeding self-hatred dooms a society. Tayo, upon realizing this truth, seeks to expose the lie and the witchery behind it:

The lie. He cut into the wire as if cutting away at the lie inside himself. The liars had fooled everyone, white people and Indians alike; as long as people believed the lies, they would never be able to see what had been done to them or what they were doing to each other. He wiped the sweat off his face onto the sleeve of his jacket. He stood back and looked at the gaping cut in the wire. If the white people never looked beyond the lie, to see that theirs was a nation built on stolen land, then they would never be able to understand how they had been used by the witchery; they would never know that they were still being manipulated by those who knew how to stir the ingredients together: white thievery and injustice boiling up the anger and hatred that would finally destroy the world: the starving against the fat, the colored against the white. (191)

Tayo has been taught to question and mistrust his entire culture but realizes the source of the doubt. As the story becomes reality for Tayo, he seeks to physically express the reality of his vision, a symbolic gesture he hopes will open the eyes of the thieving, witchery-led whites and lead them away from their imminent destruction of the world. Tayo has grown up with the sight of Indian land stolen for white use and now sees the greater consequences of these actions:

The destroyers had only to set it into motion, and sit back to count the casualties. But it was more than a body count; the lies devoured white

hearts, and for more than two hundred years white people had worked to fill their emptiness; they tried to glut the hollowness with patriotic wars and with great technology and the wealth it brought. And always they had been fooling themselves, and they knew it. (191)

Through the ceremony, Tayo comes to realize more than himself; he begins to see the effects of witchery upon the world and its likely consequences. Everything and everyone is interconnected, and the effects of the witchery will ripple throughout the world, leaving nothing untouched, unscathed.

As he continues his search, Tayo discovers that his acceptance of the fact that the cattle have indeed been stolen, along with the land, allows him to more fully appreciate Betonie's words and guidance. His acceptance marks another point in his ceremony, and he is able to continue:

He had been so intent on finding the cattle that he had forgotten all the events of the past days and years. Hunting the cattle was good for that. Old Betonie was right. It was a cure for that, and maybe for other things, too. The spotted cattle wouldn't be lost anymore, scattered through his dreams, driven by his hesitation to admit they had been stolen, that the land—all of it—had been stolen from them. (192)

In the first part of the novel, Tayo has been a prisoner to his memories of the past. Only after he learns to accept the past does he begin to become whole again. He now realizes he is not a prisoner to his memories. Time is not merely linear; it supercedes any specific formula and is like the sun, spherical and exuding light in all directions. Time has no boundary, and any point in time may be connected to any other point in

time, regardless of the distance between the two:

The ride into the mountain had branched into all directions of time. He knew then why the oldtimers could only speak of yesterday and tomorrow in terms of the present moment: the only certainty; and this present sense of being was qualified with bare hints of yesterday or tomorrow, by saying, 'I go up to the mountain yesterday or I go up to the mountain tomorrow.' The ck'o'yo Kaup'a'ta somewhere is stacking his gambling sticks and waiting for a visitor; Rocky and I are walking across the ridge in the moonlight; Josiah and Robert are waiting for us. This night is a single night; and there has never been any other. (192)

Even with this revelation, Tayo still has doubts at this point of the ceremony. As he realizes his night is escaping and his mission remains incomplete, he begins to question the importance of Betonie's vision, the mysterious Ts'eh, and their importance to his life, "What ever made him think he could do this? The woman under the apricot tree meant nothing at all; it was all in his own head. When they caught him, they'd send him back to the crazy house for sure. He was trapped now, tricked into trying something that could never work" (194). Tayo's fatigue and concern with one specific measurement of time cause him to doubt his progress and the importance of those involved in his journey. His mind has been opened to the idea of nonlinear time, and although he sees its possibility, he still has trouble grasping its reality. In his despair and fatigue, Tayo gives himself up to the pine needles underneath a tree, feeling that his defeat is near. It is at this moment of extreme and utter hopelessness that Tayo is given the guidance he needs in the form of a mountain lion appearing with immense

grace and beauty, “When the mountain lion stopped in front of him, it was not hesitation, but a chance for the moonlight to catch up with him. Tayo got to his knees slowly and held out his hand” (195-196). This noble, majestic creature displays the beauty of nature as well as a lack of concern for the movement of time. Its movements are beyond time, mimicking the clouds. When the mountain lion pauses in front of Tayo, he realizes he must acknowledge it:

“Mountain lion,” he whispered, “mountain lion, becoming what you are with each breath, your substance changing with the earth and the sky.” The mountain lion blinked his eyes; there was no fear. He gazed at him for another instant and then sniffed the southeast wind before he crossed the stream and disappeared into the trees, his outline lingering like yellow smoke, then suddenly gone. (196)

The creature shows no fear of Tayo, of man. It makes its presence known and then disappears. With the mountain lion’s leaving, Tayo pays tribute to its appearance as he carefully examines the paw prints left behind, “He kept his back to the wind and poured yellow pollen from Josiah’s tobacco sack into the cup of his hand. He leaned close to the earth and sprinkled pinches of yellow pollen into the four footprints. Mountain lion, the hunter. Mountain lion, the hunter’s helper” (196). The mountain lion’s appearance gives Tayo renewed hope and direction. Robert M. Nelson notes that the mountain lion’s appearance also serves as a “test to see whether Tayo was prepared to love rather than destroy this representative spirit of the place” (159). Tayo passes this test and is rewarded. The mountain lion’s silent departure provides Tayo with guidance, literally, “He rode the mare west again, in the direction the mountain lion had come

from. The sound of the wind in the pine branches and the smell of snow from the mountain made him alert” (196). Tayo’s senses once again become acute to the surroundings, like the mountain lion’s. His decision not to give up in the pine needles and continue this part of the ceremony leads him to another positive vision, that of the sunrise, “At dawn he stopped on a grassy ridge to watch the sun rise; he let the mare graze, part of the cycle of restoration. Inside him the muddy water turmoil was settling to the bottom, and streaks of clarity were slowly emerging. Gathering the spotted cattle was only one color of sand falling from the fingertips; the design was still growing, but already long ago it had encircled him” (196). With the mountain lion’s appearance and the renewing strength of the sunrise, Tayo is able to glimpse the magnitude of the ceremony. The metaphor of the sand falling from fingertips exhibits a power existing beyond mere mortal comprehension. Even though incomplete, Tayo sees that this has existed for a long time and remains unfinished, requiring an unknown amount of time to find fruition. As he comes to this understanding, Tayo turns to see his long sought after goal: the spotted cattle, “When he turned away from the sun to mount the mare, he saw the spotted cattle, grazing in a dry lake flat below the ridge. They were facing southeast, grazing in a herd” (196). They are facing in the same direction that the mountain lion briefly regarded during his appearance. When they sense the presence of Tayo and the mare, the cattle run, “They ran southeast, in the direction he wanted them to go, with tails straight out behind their manure-stained haunches, running more like deer than cattle, moving from thicket to thicket for cover, avoiding the clearings...He let the mare run far behind them, confident of their direction” (197). Tayo finds the confidence and assurance to continue his search as well as his ceremony. By opening himself to the

natural world, he experiences the connection he has with it and the guidance it offers him.

The search for his uncle's missing cattle is a continuation of Tayo's ceremony. He finds himself close to the land, a firsthand observer of the attempts of the evil of the world to contain the land and give it an owner. Tayo realizes that the land, regardless of fences and barbed wire, cannot be contained; the land surpasses any boundaries, including those of man and those of time and space. The search also contains a test of Tayo's intentions towards the mountain and its inhabitants. The destruction and devastation the mountain as a whole has suffered through the work of the witchery reinforces the concept of interconnectedness; the damage done to the land and the creatures upon it reaches beyond any barbed wire boundaries and is not subject to limits of time and space. The appearance of the mountain lion gives Tayo guidance as well as proving he does not intend to harm the lion or other creatures as they have been harmed by the witchery of the world. Tayo also faces a lie buried deep within him: whites are superior to Indians. He realizes he has long mistrusted his own people and the devastating consequence of an entire culture distrusting itself is another example of the witchery's evil intentions. In this part of Tayo's ceremony, he opens his mind to what has been done and who has truly done the damage. He also realizes a new confidence that guides him to Josiah's missing cattle, recovering a lost part of himself and his people. By retrieving the cattle, Tayo is able to defeat one aspect of the witchery. With this reassurance that the witchery can be defeated in part, it becomes conceivable that it can be defeated in its entirety. With this faith, Tayo is able to face the final challenge in his ceremony.

CHAPTER 4: TAYO AND THE END OF THE WORLD

Through his struggles with the war and its memories, guidance from Betonie and the unique love and acceptance of Ts'eh, Tayo faces and conquers the ultimate challenge in his ceremony. In the beginning of the novel, Tayo found himself torn between the old, ritualistic ways of his people and the modern, accepted, and expected ways of the white world he found himself thrown into. The one person who most strongly brings out these feelings of conflict is Emo. Emo shows a love for all things evil and corrupted that the white world represents to Tayo. Emo brags about killing as he produces his trophies, carousing with white women while in the service, and a greed for the material possessions of the white world. While Tayo is uncertain of many things about his life and himself, he knows he loathes Emo, Emo's desires and Emo's actions. Tayo does not, earlier in the novel, know who he is, but he knows who he is not. Tayo is not and never will be a man like Emo.

As Tayo embarks upon his ceremony, he begins to discover that his extreme disgust for Emo is not just a centralized, personal hate. Emo represents an evil consciousness pervading the world, an ancient force constantly present and recognizable to few who are aware enough to know what the evil force is. Betonie introduces Tayo to an understanding of the evil of the world, the witchery responsible for the destructive forces of the white world. Tayo's struggle becomes more than a self-centered quest for personal peace and understanding; He becomes aware of the interconnectedness of the world around him, an intricate web that links everyone and

every thing together, forging bonds across time and space. With this newfound knowledge and Betonie's visions of Tayo's future, Tayo begins to find his way in the confusing world around him.

As Betonie's visions begin to come to fruition, Tayo continues to feel confusion but finds himself more capable of coping with it. As Ts'eh enters Tayo's world, he finds acceptance and love permeating his world, qualities long absent from Tayo's life. Betonie gives Tayo the knowledge of the interconnectedness of the world, and Ts'eh shows Tayo his place among the world, how he fits into this world is tied to everyone and everything in it. Ts'eh shows Tayo how to care for the plants and animals, care which is circular in nature. The care shown to the plants and animals benefits humankind as well. With Ts'eh's acceptance and guidance and Betonie's history of the ancient workings of the world, Tayo finds himself renewed and ready, albeit uneasy, to face the world.

As Tayo and Ts'eh's time together draws to a close, Ts'eh helps him to realize what he has yet to face, the most difficult part of his ceremony. He has known that the evil in the world is alive and thriving, and that it is part of his story and his ceremony. Through Betonie's guidance and wisdom and Ts'eh's unconditional love and acceptance, Tayo is prepared to face what may be the end of the world, a difficult challenge that Tayo, although humanly uneasy and apprehensive, is quite ready to meet.

Before they part, Ts'eh warns Tayo about the destroyers and the witchery in the world and how they grow stronger, thriving upon destruction:

“The destroyers: they work to see how much can be lost, how much can

be forgotten. They destroy the feeling people have for each other . . .
They are all around now. Only destruction is capable of arousing a
sensation, the remains of something alive in them; and each time they do
it, the scar thickens, and they feel less and less, yet still hungering for
more.” (229-230)

Tayo has seen the destruction first hand, as well as the appetite it feeds in those like Emo. He recalls, though, the words of Betonie, and Ts’eh challenges him, “ ‘Old Betonie said there was some way to stop—/ ‘It all depends,’ she said. ‘How far are you willing to go?’ ” (230). Tayo’s ceremony becomes more than renewal for himself; it surpasses the boundary of Tayo’s needs, making him aware of his own importance to his people. He also realizes this responsibility requires his dedication. He cannot give up when difficulty arises and must be willing to persevere. Ts’eh later recounts to Tayo everything happening in his absence, the workings of the witchery. She sees the last struggle of his ceremony and the story the witchery would have, one in which Tayo’s life ends in the hills, “They’ll call to you. Friendly voices. If you come quietly, they will take you and lock you in the white walls of the hospital. But if you don’t go with them, they’ll hunt you down, and take you any way they can. Because this is the only ending they understand” (232). Just as Betonie shared his visions with Tayo, Ts’eh shares hers as well. She sees what is happening, how Emo has used a story for witchery’s purpose, and to those he has told it, it is true: Tayo is crazy and must be returned to the hospital or face his death. As she continues, he begins to see the story, “ ‘If they didn’t find you right away, the white people would get impatient.’ He nodded and smiled; the squeezing around his chest faded. He knew the rest of the story” (233). He continues telling the

story, of how fear and impatience will lead to the whites leaving and the old men returning home after they grow bored with watching the whites “act like fools” (233). Ts’eh knows the story, and sees the difficulty ahead of Tayo, “ ‘That leaves Emo and the others,’ she said, unrolling their blankets on the sand, ‘and that part won’t be easy’ “ (233). Tayo finds comfort in knowing part of how the story will proceed; the foreseeable indifference of the whites and the boredom of the old men of the village leaves Emo and the ones he has convinced, those that are tools of the witchery. Tayo can avoid the government men, but he cannot avoid the witchery. He must face it in the last part of his ceremony.

When he awakens in the cave after Ts’eh has left, Tayo feels the anticipation of what is to come; he knows he must not be found so that the story will be as he and Ts’eh saw it, with the foolishness and fears of the whites and the boredom of the old men leaving only Emo and the others. He leaves the cave taking care not to draw attention to himself and carelessly end the story the witchery would have it, “He moved each foot carefully because the sound of rocks rolling down and dry branches breaking would echo in the canyon, and if they were close enough, they would know he was getting away. His heart was pounding. They were coming to end it their way.” (235) He cautiously makes his way to the road and to his escape. Tayo soon finds strength to continue, strength that comes from the land and the interconnectedness of all things he views as dawn approaches, merging all things, good and bad, together, “All things seemed to converge there. . . at that moment in the sunrise, it was all so beautiful, everything, from all directions, evenly, perfectly, balancing day with night, summer months with winter. The valley was enclosing this totality, like the mind holding all

thoughts in a single moment” (237). Tayo senses the balance of the world, the balance of life. In the beginning of the novel, he struggled with the boundlessness of time and space. He constantly felt the movement back and forth through time and space and could not move forward with his life until he understood the nonexistence of boundaries. Tayo now accepts this lack of boundaries and the fluidity of time and space. From this acceptance and understanding he is able to gather strength and move toward the end of the ceremony, “The strength came from here, from this feeling. It had always been there. He stood there with the sun on his face, and he thought maybe he might make it after all” (237). The strength itself is a permanent force, and it is only with his understanding and acceptance that rediscovers it. Tayo finally sees the eminent conclusion of the ceremony and the distinct possibility that he will succeed.

This newfound feeling of strength and the conceivability of success, however, is quickly tested. Shortly after his discovery, Tayo senses an approaching vehicle and fights the old fears, remembering Army doctors in Government cars as he hides in the Juniper trees, but finding relief in a familiar sight, “It was moving very slowly, the engine whining in low gear. Leroy’s truck. Leroy and Harley. His stomach smoothed out and he felt loose. He was smiling and suddenly close to tears because they had come when he needed friends most. He stepped out from behind the juniper tree and waved both arms above his head (238). Leroy and Harley appear when Tayo feels the most vulnerable. He feels he is capable of overcoming the witchery but maintains his human fears as well. Although ultimately he will have to depend on that strength that resides within himself, at this moment he appreciates the familiarity of his old friends and the comfort that comes from that familiarity. This familiarity includes the drinking long associated

with Tayo's friends, whether in a bar or driving down the road. Drinking often leads to the unintended disclosure of information, and it is such a disclosure that leads Tayo to doubts of his friends' intentions. Leroy states that he and Harley have been "driving around all night," but Harley quickly counters that the two have spent the night in Gallup (240). Tayo begins to feel uneasy and wants to avoid any thoughts that question his friends' loyalty as he analyzes the direction of their arrival, a direction that strays from their accustomed route, ". . . they usually stayed on 66, where there was a bar every ten or fifteen miles, or 'every six-pack,' as Harley liked to say" (240). The drinking of his friends contributes to their inability to function in this world. Tayo has experienced this drinking and seen it far too often among the Indian veterans. Although Tayo attempts to calm his fears in the old way, with a drink, he has been exposed to a new way of thinking, the ceremony and the necessity of change. This acceptance of change and its place in the world helps him to listen to a feeling within him that knows the story and knows the truth about his "friends":

Harley and Leroy were his buddies. His friends. But he was feeling something terrible inside, and his heart was beating hard now, from what Leroy had said about 'driving around all night'; they had come from the direction he had come, behind him, following him. He gripped the can tight, trying to squeeze away the shaking in his hands. (240)

Tayo has not been drinking all night as his friends have and notices the discrepancy in their story. He does not want to believe they are involved in the witchery, that they are possibly associated with Emo now and the tools of the witchery of which Ts'eh has warned him. Yet, just as the strength to complete the ceremony is inside him, the

knowledge of Leroy and Harley's eminent betrayal lies within Tayo. He fights this knowledge, though, wanting desperately to believe in his friends' loyalty, "He breathed deeply and closed his eyes. He had to relax and get hold of these thoughts before they scattered in all directions like a herd of sheep. These guys were his friends" (240). Tayo wants to believe in his friends and tries to push away these thoughts of distrust, taking a beer and attempting to lose himself in this moment with reassurances:

The truck's motion and the beer were soothing; the steel and glass closed out everything. The sky, the land were distant then; trees and hills moved past the windshield glass like movie film. It would be easy to get lost in this place of theirs, where the past, even a few hours before, suddenly lost its impact and seemed like a vague dream compared to these sensations: the motion, vibrations of wheels against the road, the warmth of beer in the belly, and the steel cab snug around them. He would rest there, and not think about the night before. He needed to rest for a while, and not think about the story or the ceremony. Otherwise, it would make him crazy and even suspicious of his friends; and without friends he didn't have a chance of completing the ceremony. (241)

Tayo allows himself to be temporarily seduced into escapism, accepting the comfort of the artificiality of the beer and the truck. He is physically separated from the land by the truck, by the glass and steel, and temporarily loses his grasp of the importance of the ceremony, seeking instead to fall back to another time and place where his friends' loyalty was unquestionable. He remembers Ts'eh's guidance, but convinces himself that being with his friends is not a suspicious act, "She had been right once already

when she told him to leave the springs. So he would hang around with Harley and Leroy; everyone would understand that: riding around, drinking with his buddies. They wouldn't be suspicious then; they wouldn't think he was crazy. He'd just be another drunk Indian, that's all" (241). The separation from the land will easily make Tayo exactly that: "another drunk Indian," without a purpose, without hope and strength, and ultimately leaving the ceremony incomplete and the witchery left to spread its devastation upon the world. What brings Tayo back to his purpose is the life giving force of the sun shining through the windshield, forcing him to reconnect with the land and reaffirm his purpose as he awakens to find himself in the confined heat of the truck cab, with windows rolled up and his friends gone, "The heat in the cab made him weak and sluggish. He rolled down the window and hung his head out. The beer vomit ran down the truck door into dry weeds. His head was pounding, and he was thirsty. He got out of the truck and could hardly stand up; the muscles of his legs were stiff" (241). The sun's rays penetrate the glass that helps to separate Tayo from the land, compelling him to void himself of the beer and leave the isolation of the truck. His thirst is more than physical; it is also a need to reestablish his connection to what he has learned. As Tayo begins to grasp a conscious awareness of his surroundings, he has trouble reconnecting with the guidance of Ts'eh and Betonie, a connection that will, in part, help to fulfill his thirst:

He was looking for footprints. He listened, and there was nothing but the sound of the wind, like a hawk sweeping close to the ground, whirring wings of wind that called back years long past and the people lost in them, all returning briefly in a gust of wind. The feeling lasted only as long as the

sound, but he wanted to go with them, to be swept away. It was difficult then to call up the feeling the stories had, the feeling of Ts'eh and old Betonie. It was easier to feel and to believe the rumors. Crazy. Crazy Indian. Seeing things, imagining things. (242)

He is struggling to accept the stories generated by the witchery because he has not yet fully regained his bond to the land, nor to Ts'eh and Betonie. He feels those he has lost, temporarily wanting to be lost himself. He finally finds Leroy and Harley's footprints and begins to seek them, but he stops when he realizes the true nature of his friends' appearance, a realization he feels in his belly and chest, leaving an emptiness within Tayo, ". . . he knew then that they were not his friends but had turned against him, and the knowledge left him hollow and dry inside, like the locust's shell. He was not sure why he was crying, for the betrayal or because they were lost" (242). Once again the witchery creates emptiness. The land has been devastated and countless lives have been affected by its destruction. While Tayo has seen and experienced this decimation first hand, it takes one final blow of immensely personal dimensions for Tayo to truly and fully see the power of the witchery. He has fought his suspicions but finally realizes the truth they possess. The friends he believed to be capable of helping him finish the ceremony are now tools of the witchery, and Tayo knows now they are lost to him. He has struggled to reach this point in the ceremony, one that benefits not only Tayo, but all his people, and now two of those people closest to him have fallen prey to the witchery. This understanding brings a new clarity to Tayo as he realizes the where he is and the reason behind his doubts, "He knew why he had felt weak and sick; he knew why he had lost the feeling Ts'eh had given him, and why he had doubted the

ceremony: this was their place, and he was vulnerable” (242-243). The understanding of this place and the betrayal of Leroy and Harley empowers Tayo, answering his doubts and compelling him to rely upon what he has learned as well as the strength residing within him. He attempts to hot-wire the truck but knows he must run, escaping his betrayers before they return and before the night falls, “He looked up at the top of the hill, and then around at the sky and the canyon. The sun was moving down in the sky, but the heat still danced above the salt bushes in the canyon. He slipped the screw driver into his hip pocket and started running” (243). Tayo knows he is in a place controlled by the witchery, a place that has been raped by the whites and used for destruction. When they have taken what they wanted, the uranium and the machinery, the whites leave this place broken and discarded, “They left behind only the barbed-wire fences, the watchman’s shack, and the hole in the earth.” (244). This place has only meant death and destruction, providing a means for the witchery to continue its devastation. This passage also shows the determination of the people to use what they can, just as Ts’eh used the natural trap to capture the cattle, “Cebolleta people salvaged lumber and tin from the shack, but they had no use for the barbed-wire any more; the last bony cattle wandering the dry canyons had died in choking summer duststorms” (244). As Tayo finds cover in the growing darkness, he finds water in a water trough and a physical representation of the witchery’s far reaching destruction:

The water was still warm from the sun and it tasted bitter. He sat on the edge of the trough and looked across the wide canyon at the dark mine shaft. Maybe the uranium made the water taste that way. The sandstone and dirt they had taken from inside the mesa was piled in mounds, in long

rows, like fresh graves. (244-245)

The contents of the mine have resulted in millions of graves, echoed by the sandstone and dirt formations found outside the mine. Tayo now recalls Grandma's story of unknowingly witnessing the testing of the Atomic bomb, " 'Now I only wonder why, grandson. Why did they make a thing like that?', " as well as his proximity to this test that led to mass destruction:

He had been so close to it, caught up in it for so long that its simplicity struck him deep inside his chest: Trinity Site, where they exploded the first atomic bomb, was only three hundred miles to the southeast, at White Sands. And the top-secret laboratories where the bomb had been created were deep in the Jemez Mountains, on land the Government took from Cochiti Pueblo: Los Alamos, only a hundred miles northeast of him now, still surrounded by high electric fences and the ponderosa pine and tawny sandrock of the Jemez mountain canyon where the shrine of the twin mountain lions had always been. There was no end to it; it knew no boundaries; and he had arrived at the point of convergence where the fate of all living things, and even the earth, had been laid. (245-246)

The witchery has used the resources of the land for its own evil purposes, brazenly defiling land the Indians have respected and cherished. The evil consequences do, however, serve to unite humankind, albeit a unity of misery. Tayo now realizes why all the voices blended together, the Japanese and Laguna, Uncle Josiah's and Rocky's:

The lines of cultures and worlds were drawn in flat dark lines on fine light sand, converging in the middle of witchery's final ceremonial sand

painting. From that time on, human beings were one clan again, united by the fate the destroyers planned for all of them, for all living things; united by a circle of death that devoured people in cities twelve thousand miles away, victims who had never known these mesas, who had never seen the delicate colors of the rocks which boiled up their slaughter. (246)

In this moment of clarity, Tayo understands the reasons for his earlier difficulties with time and space and the visions which haunted him. Rachel Stein observes, "Tayo realizes that the uranium used for the bombing of Japan has been mined on the Laguna Reservation, and so the fate of the Laguna and the fate of the Japanese are truly intertwined" (204). He has accepted the boundlessness of time and space, but this is another dimension of his visions, showing his ultimate purpose and his earlier recognition of the unity of all beings, all over the world, even though he was not capable of the complete comprehension of his visions and their purpose until after he received the guidance and wisdom of Betonie and Ts'eh. The witchery's far reaching impact is tangible now to Tayo; it is a story he has lived, and a reality he has witnessed.

The ceremony's completion is now something Tayo can see, just as he now sees the far reaching destruction of the witchery. As he moves toward the mine shaft, the image of the land and its wrongful use by the witchery becomes visible:

. . . the feeling became overwhelming: the pattern of the ceremony was completed there. He knelt and found an ore rock. The gray stone was streaked with powdery yellow uranium, bright and alive as pollen; veins of sooty black formed lines with the yellow, making mountain ranges and rivers across the stone. But they had taken these beautiful rocks from

deep within earth and they had laid them in a monstrous design, realizing destruction on a scale only *they* could have dreamed. (246)

Tayo sees that anything can be used as a tool by the witchery. Robert M. Nelson observes that “one can harness the power of the land to the ends of regeneration or final annihilation” (163). The mine and its contents contain the juxtaposition of the land’s beauty with the witchery’s destructive power. Tayo has seen that the land can be used in a benign way, such as the arroyo trap Ts’eh uses to recapture the cattle earlier. The land can be treated with respect and kindness and yield advantageous results. In contrast, the land can be twisted and shaped to meet the needs of witchery and evil, leaving the land broken and scarred. The mine represents the broken land, used to reach evil aspirations and left behind when those destructive goals are achieved.

While Tayo’s newfound understanding shows him the interconnectedness of all living things, it also serves to show Tayo something crucial to himself alone: he is not insane. He finds relief in this epiphany, “He cried the he felt at finally seeing the pattern, the way all the stories fit together—the old stories, the war stories, their stories—to become the story that was still being told. He was not crazy; he had never been crazy. He had only seen and heard the world as it always was: no boundaries, only transitions through all distances and time” (246). This immense reality leads to Tayo’s vision of the stars and his assurance that all things are nearing completion:

The pattern of the ceremony was in the stars, and the constellation formed a map of the mountains in the directions he had gone for the ceremony. For each star there was a night and a place; this was the last night and the last place, when the darkness of night and the light of day

were balanced. His protection was there in the sky, in the position of the sun, in the pattern of the stars. He had only to complete this night, to keep the story out of the reach of the destroyers for a few more hours, and their witchery would turn, upon itself, upon them. (247)

He has found guidance in the stars throughout the ceremony, and they show him the path to safety and successfully circumventing the motives of the witchery. Just as he has found renewal in the sun's appearance at dawn, the sunrise continues to hold promise for Tayo. The story of Arrowboy following Tayo's relief and comfort shows that the story has indeed been written, and Tayo will follow this mythic journey to the ceremony's end. Arrowboy follows "her into the hills/ up where the caves were," discovering the witchman and those helping him with the witchery dancing around a fire. His hidden observation of them affects the witchery, "Something is wrong," he said./ "Ck'o'yo magic won't work/ if someone is watching us" (247). The story echoes Tayo's time with Ts'eh as well as his destined travel to the caves and confrontation of the witchery. It also foreshadows the reappearance of Tayo's 'friends' and his role as observer to their ritual. Tayo watches as Emo, Leroy, and Pinkie surround a fire, "They were feeding dry tumbleweeds to the fire, holding them high over their heads and circling the fire before they let go and the tumbleweeds exploded into fiery balls that lighted up the area around the windmill where the car was parked" (248-249). The arrival of Emo and the others mirrors the story of Arrowboy, as they dance around the fire. From his hiding place he knows exactly who they are: "The destroyers" (249). Tayo knows their purpose and the far reaching consequences their success will have:

They would be there all night, he knew it, working for drought to sear the

land, to kill the livestock, to stunt the corn plants and squash in the gardens, leaving the people more and more vulnerable to the lies; and the young people would leave, go to towns like Albuquerque and Gallup where bitterness would overwhelm them, and they would lose their hope and finally themselves in drinking. (249)

He sees the eventual death of his society at the hands of the witchery. Tayo has already seen first hand the devastation of the war on his people alone, leaving them broken and finding comfort only in a bottle. This despair can only lead to one outcome: the death of his people, trapped into seeing only the injustice in the world:

The witchery would be at work all night so that the people would see only the losses—the land and the lives lost—since the whites came; the witchery would work so that the people would be fooled into blaming only the whites and not the witchery. It would work to make the people forget the stories of the creation and continuation of the five worlds; the old priests would be afraid too, and cling to ritual without making new ceremonies as they had always done before. . . . (249)

Tayo has learned from Betonie that the ceremonies must change. He understands that the people are afraid of change, as witnessed in his treatment as a “half breed,” and the words and teachings of the Night Swan and Betonie. It would be simple to give into the witchery’s desires, to blame the whites and escape in drinking. It is much more difficult, though, to be flexible and bend, to find a new ceremony.

As Tayo observes this ritual, his doubts begin to resurface. He still finds difficulty accepting that his friends would betray him. The ceremony requires an immensity of

strength, draining Tayo, which allows his exhaustion to force the old doubts back to his consciousness:

He might be wrong about them. Harley had helped him last year; he had come and got him moving again. He was exhausted; the fear and the running from that day and from the night before had left him weak. He needed to rest. This ceremony was draining his endurance. He could not feel anything then, not for Josiah or Rocky and not for the woman. Maybe the other Navajos had been right about old Betonie. (250)

While Tayo's friends have been loyal in the past, they have become tools of the witchery, just as Ts'eh warned. They allowed themselves to become lost in the drinking, having lost any vision of the future, which made them vulnerable to the witchery.

Regardless of his numerous questions regarding his purpose and connections, though, he is compelled to remain:

Emo and Pinkie kept him there; Pinkie found the tire iron and was pounding the hood of the car again. The sound set his teeth on edge and angered him in a way he had not felt since the day he had stabbed Emo. It was the sound of witchery: smashing through the night, shrill and cold as black metal. It was the empty sound of his nightmares; even the voices he recognized. He covered his ears with both hands and ground his molars together. (250)

The familiarity crashes into Tayo, reminding him of his own anger and inability to control it as well as the dreams which haunted him for so long. Again the witchery manifests itself in the use of inanimate objects. The glass and metal of the truck earlier separated

Tayo from the land, and now the tire iron is a tool of the witchery, which is confirmed by its horrible sound. These objects are manmade, and while the land has itself been used for witchery's purpose, the artificiality of these creations is a step further away from the land and its restorative possibilities. Tayo soon realizes that someone else has been trapped by the steel and coldness of a vehicle. He earlier noted Harley's absence but now discovers that Harley has been there all along, as his screams suspend the tire iron's noise, screams that emanate from the car trunk. By the time Tayo can move to see what is happening, Harley has been removed from the trunk, "He heard laughter and when he looked around the corner of the boulder, his heart went numb in his chest, and he wasn't aware of his own rapid breathing any more. In the moonlight he could see Harley's body hanging from the fence, where they had tangled it upright between strands of barbed wire" (250-251). With this discovery, it is still possible to believe that Harley remains loyal to his friendship with Tayo. But Tayo knows; he knows why Harley is in this situation, "He knew what they were doing; Harley had failed them, and all that had been intended for Tayo had now been turned on Harley. There was no way the destroyers could lose: either way they had a victim and a corpse" (251). Just as Tayo has seen his safety in the stars and the ending of the ceremony, he knows now that his friend had intended to betray him, that Harley had been one of the tools of the witchery, as Ts'eh warned. Harley is still being used by the witchery, but when it was not satisfied, it turned upon him. The others remind Harley of his orders, to watch Tayo and stay with him, as well as his failure and the consequences of this failure; Harley must now face the consequences of his choices, "Pinkie held his leg, and Leroy cut the whorl from the bottom of his big toe. Harley screamed hoarsely; the sound trailed off to

a groan” (251). Tayo’s presence is known and Emo addresses him indirectly, “ ‘Scream!’ Emo said. ‘Scream loud so he can hear you.’ “ (251) Just as the witchman and the others knew Arrowboy was present at their ceremony, Emo knows Tayo is there. Emo has already shown that he thrives on violence and blood. He does not care now who the recipient of that violence is, just that it is completed. This arouses the feelings of violence Tayo has succumbed to earlier. He has been reminded of the time he could not control the anger and he attacked Emo, and now those violent thoughts resurface, “He reached into his hip pocket for the screwdriver. . . The screwdriver was slippery in his hands. It nauseated him to see Harley’s body jerking and twitching in the sagging barbed wire, with hands and knives so greedy for human flesh” (251). Tayo’s anger surfaces at the cruelty done to Harley; even though Harley has betrayed him, he has considered Harley his friend, and those are feelings he cannot easily discard. As he witnesses the destroyers carving away chunks of Harley’s skin, Emo speaks directly to Tayo, attempting to provoke him, “ ‘Look at this, you half-breed! White son of a bitch! You can’t hide from this! Look! Your buddy, Harley’ “ (252). Emo refers to Tayo as a “half-breed,” but Emo is the one who has allowed his Laguna heritage to be corrupted by the witchery. Although Tayo may indeed be in part white, he has not allowed the witchery to take over and use him as a tool for its own purposes. Tayo instantly feels the need to act, to respond to this violence and end it:

He closed his fingers around the screwdriver and squeezed it until it was part of his hand. He understood that Harley had bargained for it; he realized that Harley knew how it would end if he failed to get the victim he had named. But Tayo could not endure it any longer. He was certain his

own sanity would be destroyed if he did not stop them and all the suffering and dying they caused—the people incinerated and exploded, and little children asleep on the streets outside Gallup bars. He was not strong enough to stand by and watch any more. He would rather die himself. . . He visualized the contours of Emo's skull; the GI haircut exposed thin bone at the temples, bone that would flex slightly before it gave way under the thrust of the steel edge. (252)

The simple screwdriver is about to become another tool of the witchery, used in a way that will continue the violence and destruction. Tayo, though, recovers his strength and all he has learned. He is not an agent of the witchery, and will not succumb to its needs:

The witchery had almost ended the story according to its plan; Tayo had almost jammed the screwdriver into Emo's skull the way the witchery had wanted, savoring the yielding bone and membrane as the steel ruptured the brain. Their deadly ritual for the autumn solstice would have been completed by him. He would have been another victim, a drunk Indian war veteran settling an old feud. (253)

Tayo still sees the satisfaction of killing Emo, but it is a temptation from which he chooses to turn away. Susan Blumenthal asserts that Tayo's resistance to react with violence to the witchery happens when Tayo "watches the murder of his friends Harley and Leroy. He knows his involvement would only lead to his own destruction too" (367-377). First, Tayo does not witness Leroy's murder; Leroy is found later, with Harley, in the crushed cab of the truck. While Tayo realizes what succumbing to violent actions would have made him, another victim, he more importantly realizes the affects his

actions, both positive and negative ones, have on his people, an idea reinforced by the interconnectedness of all things he has come to understand through the course of his ceremony. His actions would have been easy to explain, but would have ultimately brought more pain and suffering to his people:

The white people would shake their heads, more proud than sad that it took a white man to survive in their world and that these Indians couldn't seem to make it. At home the people would blame liquor, the Army, and the war, but the blame on the whites would never match the vehemence the people would keep in their own bellies, reserving the greatest bitterness and blame for themselves, for one of themselves they could not save. (253)

Tayo again sees that his actions have an impact that reaches beyond himself. Just as the witchery's evil is far reaching, Tayo's own action or inaction ripples and affects his people. Everyone and everything is interconnected, as old Ku'oosh told him. Tayo has realized that the ceremony affects more than himself, and he also sees that his actions have consequences beyond himself.

After the destroyers leave with their victim, Tayo sees the need to renew the land, to somehow pay respect to it and continue Ts'eh's work. He has realized the importance of his actions and the impact of any negative choices upon not just himself, but his people as a whole. This also means he realizes the affect of positive actions, of life giving acts that require respect and love for the land:

He would go back there now, where she had shown him the plant. He would gather the seeds for her and plant them with great care in places

near sandy hills. The rainwater would seep down gently and the delicate membranes would not be crushed or broken before the emergence of tiny fingers, roots, and leaves pressing out in all directions. The plants would grow there like the story, strong and translucent as the stars. (254)

The witchery has depended on a separation from the land, using metal and glass to achieve this separation, or separating the land itself, either through the destructive mining of the land or the partitioning of the land with barbed-wire fences. Tayo's actions are restorative and regenerative. They signify new life flourishing from the land, life that summons the image of a newborn baby, something fragile that grows and thrives with the proper care.

With this completion and plans of renewal, Tayo now must return home. The ceremony has taken a great deal of Tayo's strength, showing both the power of the witchery and the magnitude of this act, "His body was lost in exhaustion; he kept moving, his bones and skin staggering behind him. He dreamed with his eyes open that he was wrapped in a blanket in the back of Josiah's wagon, . . . Josiah was driving the wagon, old Grandma was holding him, and Rocky whispered 'my brother.' They were taking him home" (254). He finds strength to continue from those who will always be with him. He realized earlier with Ts'eh that his love for Josiah and Rocky, as well as their love for him, will always exist and will always be with him. As he makes his way toward home, the sunrise greets Tayo. He finds immense comfort in the love of those who have left this existence, and he finds comfort as well in the knowledge of Ts'eh, "The leaves of the big cottonwood tree had turned pale yellow; the first sunlight caught the tips of the leaves at the top of the old tree and made them bright gold. They had

always been loved. He thought of her then; she had always loved him, she had never left him; she had always been there. He crossed the river at sunrise” (255). Louis Owens feels that the “she” of this passage is Tayo’s mother, Laura, who died when he was a child, leaving him an orphan in the care of his Auntie:

As Tayo comes to understand his place in the ecosystemically determined ‘story’ of Indian–and mixed-blood–identity, his mother is reclaimed into a place within his personal story and the interdependent story of their tribal culture. Once Tayo is able to comprehend that ‘she’ had never left him, had always loved him—once he overcomes his feeling of abandonment by his mother, by his family and culture, by the land itself, his dead mother returns in the rain that revitalizes the barren landscape. . . . (113)

The “she” of this passage is a multifaceted woman; she is Laura, she is Thought-Woman sitting in her room and thinking the story, she is Ts’eh folding her storm blanket and calming the storm. As Edith Swan observes, “Variously, She is Mother, Sister, Grandmother—the syncretic woman who is the ‘naming’ and ‘knowledgeable’ creatrix birthing the universe of stories spun from her abdomen; She is the ‘mastermind’ teaching nourishing, determining how things will be, and deciding what must be done” (309-328). Tayo’s arrival at the sunrise completes a journey that began long before he was conscious of the ceremony, a story that begins with the words “she” said, “The only cure/ I know/ is a good ceremony,/ that’s what she said” (3). “She” is the storyteller and knows from the beginning the ceremony is a certainty. The word “Sunrise” appears early in the novel, solitarily gracing the page (4); throughout the novel the importance of the sunrise becomes more and more evident as praise and respect are offered to it. It

brings renewal and rebirth, as well as guidance and strength to Tayo. The story of Hummingbird and Fly appears, showing the completion of another ceremony and the renewal of the land, "The storm clouds returned/ the grass and plants started growing again./ There was food/ and the people were happy again" (256). The land and the people are restored. Tayo now must return to his people and share his story.

When Tayo returns home, he is no longer viewed as crazy or a meaningless half-breed. His ceremony and knowledge are recognized as the elders of the community sit and listen to his story, "It took a long time to tell them the story; they stopped him frequently with questions about the location and the time of day; they asked about the direction she had come from and the color of her eyes" (257). Tayo now garners respect instead of suspicion. In contrast, those who had been tools of the witchery soon meet a fate in keeping with their choices. Harley and Leroy are discovered first, secured by the same metal Tayo sought to escape, disconnected from the land, "The old GMC pickup was crushed around them like the shiny metal coffin the Veterans Office bought for each of them. In that way it was not much different than if they had died at Wake Island or Iwo Jima: the bodies were dismembered beyond recognition and the coffins were sealed" (258-259). In a sense, Harley and Leroy did die in the war; the war ultimately led to their drinking and their disconnection to their people and the land. To Tayo, Harley and Leroy were his friends, and having witnessed their betrayal, he does not recognize them. The physical dismemberment reinforces this distance and this absence of recognition. Pinkie suffers for his allegiance to the witchery as well, at the hands of Emo nonetheless, dying from a gunshot to the back of his head (260). Emo, though, does escape, told by the FBI not to return and rumored to

be in California, in which Tayo sees the irony, “ ‘California,’ Tayo repeated softly, ‘that’s a good place for him’ “ (260). The drunken ex-soldiers earlier talked about their time in the service and places like San Diego, “. . . and the cities where the white women were still waiting for them to come back. . .” (61). In the ex-soldiers drunken minds, they inflate their importance to the “white women,” thoughts which, however delusional, provide comfort to them in that they are upsetting the white man’s world. Instead, though, this makes them weak and desirable of the white man’s world and everything in it. Emo has long been obsessed with this world, and it is understandable that he would seek this world out.

In the end, Grandma’s wisdom, however understated, speaks loudly of the truth, “She sighed, and laid her head back on the chair. ‘It seems like I already heard these stories before . . . only thing is, the names sound different’ “ (260). The story is the most important thing, and it has already been told, is being told, and will be told, unaware of boundaries of time and space. It is time again for renewal, and the dawn again appears, “Sunrise,/ accept this offering,/ Sunrise” (262). The story is an offering to the sunrise, and through the story the people will be blessed with knowledge and a renewed love and respect for the land.

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