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## Achieving Cultural Identity in "Winter in the Blood" and "Ceremony"

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ACHIEVING CULTURAL IDENTITY IN *WINTER IN THE BLOOD* AND  
*CEREMONY*.

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A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of English

The College of William and Mary

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

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by

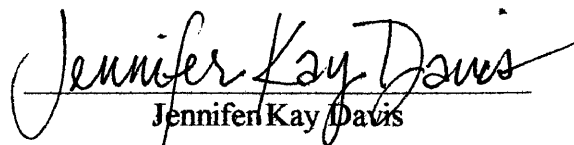
Jennifer Kay Davis

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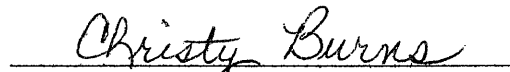
## APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of  
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Master of Arts

  
Jennifer Kay Davis

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## ABSTRACT

The central argument in this study is to compare James Welch's *Winter in the Blood* with Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*. Specifically, the main characters, the narrator in *Winter in the Blood* and Tayo in *Ceremony* are experiencing a cultural identity crisis.

The paper explores the crises that the narrator and Tayo undergo, and examines the possibility that the characters resolve their cultural identity crises *via* methods devised particularly for such a crisis by their cultures. It is further suggested that what is unique about these novels is that the narrator and Tayo modify these traditional methods to suit their personal needs and situations and the changing society.

The conclusion suggests that the characters succeed in establishing their cultural identities, and that they do so precisely because of these methods that they develop.

ACHIEVING CULTURAL IDENTITY IN  
*WINTER IN THE BLOOD* AND *CEREMONY*

In his poem, "Blackfeet, Blood, and Piegan Hunters," James Welch writes, "Children need a myth that tells them to be alive" (*Earthboy* 36). The poem's line holds key significance in the motivations of the narrator in Welch's *Winter in the Blood*, and to Tayo in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*. The main conflict that the characters within the novels must tackle is their loss of cultural identity. Both Welch's narrator and Silko's Tayo had just begun to develop a knowledge of the values of their congenital cultures when they were ripped from their environments by events that create psychological crises in their lives: in *Winter in the Blood*, the narrator's father and brother, his closest male relatives, die, and in *Ceremony*, Tayo must participate in a war where he witnesses the death of his cousin. These major psychological events hurtle the characters into an alien culture that demands that they shed, and even revile, their native cultures. The myth that tells Tayo and the narrator to be alive--their sense of who they are--has been declared a myth by a dominant culture, and consequently these characters, at the opening of the respective novels, feel little need to live.

The crises that Tayo and the narrator must resolve are not only general psychological crises but are also particularly devastating events in terms of their native cultures. This critical approach differs from the critical approach taken to date: critics have written about the respective cultures in the novels, or about the crises that the characters face; none have written about how these characters use their cultures to resolve their individual crises. Tayo is Laguna: the Laguna center their religion and society around the creation, perpetuation of life, and the feminine, and although death is an important part of that cycle, the Laguna have a horror of deliberate destruction. Laguna have never waged or taken part in war; as a culture it could be characterized as pacifist. Yet Tayo chooses to enter a war voluntarily in order to accompany his cousin. This entrance into war creates a crisis particular to his specific culture. The same is true for the

narrator. The narrator believes, for most of the novel, that he is both Gros Ventre and Blackfeet, and later finds that he is wholly Blackfeet; the author tends to meld the two cultures within the text, probably because the author has both Gros Ventre and Blackfeet heritage, and because at the time that he wrote the novel, he had an equal amount of education in each culture. Further, Gros Ventre and Blackfeet cultures are quite similar: both are masculine and focused on athletics and bravery. For Blackfeet culture *and* Gros Ventre culture, the death of a relative is probably the most devastating event an individual can face. The Blackfeet culture required a great deal of mourning, especially from a relative of the same sex. Walter McClintock, an amateur anthropologist who resided with the Blackfeet at the turn of the century, noted that "...extreme manifestations of [grief] were only shown by men towards men and not towards women" (150). Furthermore, in the past it was important for the Blackfeet to make a great show of grief for the dead, by taking such extreme actions as cutting off the first joint of their little fingers, cutting off their hair (which held far greater significance for the Blackfeet than it does for a white people), cutting their horses' manes and tails, gashing their legs and arms with knives and other sharp objects, etc. (McClintock 150-152). The narrator continues to live in numbing grief as he is left without any chance to achieve resolution for his brother's death in a cultural or personal sense, especially because of his degree of involvement with Mose's death.

In order to resolve their main conflicts, and resume "normal" lives, the narrator and Tayo must develop some cultural identity. They could choose to develop a white or Native American- (Laguna for Tayo, Blackfeet for the narrator) oriented cultural identity, but their choice of a Native American-oriented identity is more empowering to their cultural development. However, it is even more important that they feel a part of the culture to which they choose to belong (whether they choose white or Native American cultures)-- ie., they are not alienated. What is unique about these two novels--and what makes them so similar--is the approach of the main characters to managing their crises.



When Tayo and the narrator finally choose to re-orient themselves within their native cultures, they follow patterns established by their respective ethnic groups for resolving a psychological crisis-- but they *modify* these traditional patterns for their modern, and specific personal, needs. This approach differs greatly from other Native American novels in which the main character simply returns to her or his native culture and leaves the white world behind. In Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*, for example, Abel returns to the reservation and leaves Los Angeles behind. At the novel's close, he is running toward the dawn and singing a prayer from the Nightway, which is the dead center of Navajo culture. Michael Dorris and Louise Erdrich have written about characters in their fiction who have already successfully dealt with this integration problem, such as Vivian Twostar in *Crown of Columbus*, or Ida George in *A Yellow Raft in Blue Water*. As Dorris observed in his essay on the progress of Native American literature, Native Americans are "by necessity culturally adaptive"; Tayo and the narrator must bridge that gap in the middle between the dominant white Euro-American culture and the traditional beliefs of their tribes that (in the novel at any rate) are largely stuck in the previous century or the beginning of the twentieth century (Dorris 156).

Paula Gunn Allen said that in the recent past, Native Americans of *all* tribes had to "...somehow come to terms with a whole different technological universe. And that conflict means How do I keep my sense of what I am? If I am a Native American, how do I stay connected to my tradition, to my way of seeing the world? And...it's a constant fight to keep in mind for yourself who you are" (Coltelli 13). If one extends Allen's statement from dealing with a different technological universe to dealing with a different *cultural* universe, one has highlighted a part of the core of Tayo's and the narrator's psychological crisis. Malcolm McFee, an anthropologist who did fieldwork on the Montana Blackfeet reservation in the late fifties, sixties and early seventies of this century, focused his studies on defining the differences between what he referred to as "white-oriented" and "Indian-oriented" residents of the reservation. He also attempted to carefully identify the

characteristics of the individuals who belonged to the white-oriented or Indian-oriented group. For McFee, a tribal member who was white-oriented or Indian-oriented defined him or herself with the values of the particular culture. McFee contended that both groups held differing values or at the very least (where values intersected) entertained different ideologies driving those values. Generosity, which for whites with their notions of acquisitiveness means giving of one's *surplus* material goods, for the Blackfeet means giving everything one has, up to and including self-bankruptcy. He found that white-oriented society tended to "...be organized around basic values of work, self-dependence, individuality, and acquisitiveness," whereas "...the major goal of [the Indian-oriented] is to retain its ethnic identity as shown by the attachment these people have to things and practices that symbolize Indian-ness," and that the four values the Indian-oriented hold most dear are bravery, skill, wisdom and generosity (McFee 96 and 119-120). Although McFee was specifically studying the Blackfeet, his words would apply well to all Native Americans who seek to identify with their particular ethnic group. Both Tayo and the narrator undergo a shift from seeking to be white-oriented to moving back towards their ethnic identity.

In order to explain how Tayo and the narrator make this shift to ethnic identity, it would be as well to make clear the terms inherent in describing this shift, such as "ethnic group," "ethnic identity," "culture," and "cultural identity" here. Ethnic group, as used in this paper, means a collection of individuals who share a common religion and ancestry (*Library of Congress* 1728); ethnic identity is mentally placing oneself *within* that collection or body of individuals. "Culture" is a far more amorphous term; as one social scientist noted, it is "one of the most complex yet important concepts in the social sciences" (*Human Geography* 91). It has been referred to as "the whole set of activities of a human group," and also as "The collection of intellectual and artistic activities deemed to indicate and be produced by such spirits" (*Human Geography* 91). Both definitions echo each other, but as the second is more specific it will remain the working definition in this

discussion. As with ethnic identity, cultural identity is achieved when one aligns one *with* the thought of a group to a greater or lesser extent and to be a producer and/or participant off/in the products, ie. ribbon shirts, false face masks and Chilkat blankets, and activities, ie. Sun Dances, rabbit songs, and pueblo feast days, of that group.

Neither the narrator in *Winter in the Blood* nor Tayo in *Ceremony* feels that he can identify with his ethnic group. The narrator is so completely alienated that "...he was distant from myself as a hawk from the moon" (*Winter* 2). This theme of alienation is so strong that it was the theme of the 1977 MLA winter conference session devoted to the novel.<sup>1</sup> The narrator stresses that his alienation comes from himself: "But the distance I felt came not from country or people; it came from within me" (*Winter* 2). James Welch stressed the importance of the alienation theme in the novel in his interview with Laura Coltelli; Coltelli suggested that there is a "cleaning, purifying nature of winter" inherent in the title, but Welch observed that "You're always aware of how vulnerable you are during the winter months" (191). Furthermore, the author notes, "The winter, I suppose, of *Winter in the Blood* has to do mostly with the character's feeling of distance--as he says, not only from; distance in terms of mental space, emotional space, he feels as distance from his mother, distance of his grandmother, distance from the girl he brought home. So the problem seems to lie within himself..." (191).

Something must create this distance within the narrator that makes him feel so distant from these people. It is impossible to connect with others if one cannot connect with oneself. The narrator cannot connect with those around him (his mother, his grandmother, Agnes) because he has not resolved the two crises of his life: the death of his male relatives and his lack of cultural identity. By his own admission, the narrator is "...a servant to the memory of death" ; in any culture, death is a loss to which human beings must learn to reconcile themselves, yet it is possibly the most difficult task they will face in their lives (*Winter* 38). Some cultures, however, focus on death more significantly than others (ie. death is apparently less shattering for Buddhists, because they will go on

to their next life or achieve Nirvana). Among the Blackfeet, at the turn of the century, the people believed that a large external display of grief --by such signs as self-mutilation, discussed earlier in this paper--corresponded to the amount of affection/respect felt for the deceased (McClintock 150). According to Clark Wissler, an anthropologist who devoted a majority of his life's work to the Blackfeet, the mourning period was indeterminable (32). Thus, the narrator's mourning for his brother, while seemingly protracted by modern-day standards, is in keeping with horse-era Blackfeet custom. It is particularly faithful to horse-era Blackfeet culture (ie., the time the Blackfeet went to live on the reservations, around 1868, to the early part of this century) that the narrator mourns so deeply for his brother, who is mentioned--and seemingly missed by the narrator--a bit more often by the narrator in the text than First Raise. Wissler notes,

There is a peculiar artificial relationship among boys that deserves attention. Many of them have a male companion from whom they are almost inseparable. The pairs are usually of the same age and grow up together as it were; they play together, they go to war together, they aid each other in courtship and in after life call on each other for help and advice. These bonds often last until death. The terms of relationship for brothers are sometimes used by them and it is not unusual for them to assume the quality of twins.

(16)

Wissler even records that the Blackfeet have a word for this inseparable companion: *nitaks ok kowommaul* (12). It is impossible to tell from the text how much information the narrator had received about his culture prior to the death of his brother and his father's descent into alcoholism. The narrator could possibly be invested into Blackfeet culture enough to know about the *nitaks ok kowommaul* and the long mourning period, or he could simply be tapping into his native culture instinctively. This argument seems academic: either answer would indicate that at least a part of him is still interested, to some small degree at least, in his ethnic identity. It could be viewed simply as coincidence

that the narrator has spent so long in mourning, and that it is only a natural reaction to his feelings of guilt regarding his involvement in Mose's death. However, the narrator's own description of the events, which is the only way the reader gets to hear about the incident, makes it clear that the accident was no one's fault, except possibly in part by the drunk driver of the car; his intoxication would have considerably slowed his reaction time and his judgment. Coincidence seems even less likely as an explanation for the narrator's grief when noting the narrator's trip to Seattle. It greatly resembles the long trip to distant relatives that Wissler found Blackfeet taking at the time of his 1910 study to replace going on the warpath as a part of the mourning process (31). The narrator claims that his distance does not come from people, but since Mose is at the root of his psychological crisis, it seems that the narrator is lying to himself; more accurately, perhaps what he means is that people have not *intentionally* created his distance.

The narrator's inability to deal with his grief deters his ability to mediate his cultural identity crisis. At the novel's opening, the narrator has returned home from Tacoma where he received his knee operation. He tried to enter the white-oriented world and achieve a place in the modern economy; jobs are scarce and work tends to be seasonal on the Blackfeet reservation in Montana. While at the rehabilitation clinic, the narrator experiences racism for what may well have been his first time: "I had had my opportunity, a chance to work in the rehabilitation clinic in Tacoma. They like me because I was smarter than practically anybody they had ever seen. That's what they said and I believed them. It took a nurse who hated Indians to tell me the truth, that they needed a grant to build another wing and I was to be the first of the male Indians they needed to employ in order to get the grant...So I came home" (*Winter* 22). As Malcolm McFee points out, "Economic achievement plays an important role in defining status among the white-oriented people..." (103). McFee cites the City of Browning "Model City" Application of 1968 (the relative time period of the novel) on the economic state of the reservation:

'Low income is prevalent on the Reservation, particularly among Indian families. Approximately 62% of the resident Indian families have annual incomes below \$3,000.00 and the mean income is \$1,700.00. It has been estimated that approximately 3,000 persons receive some form of welfare financial assistance during part of each year. In the case of large families, the assistance standards are sometimes actually competitive with available earned income, since many local jobs, cowpunching for examples, pay far below minimum standard wages...The overall picture is one of widespread economic impoverishment which in the case of many families is shared with emotional impoverishment.'

(64)

The racism that prevents the narrator from getting a job on his own merits also prevents him from earning an income, which is not only necessary for the obvious reasons of sustenance and survival, but also for his self-esteem and his membership in the dominant society. Inability to participate in white-oriented society makes it impossible for the narrator to identify with it. Racism *is* part of the cause of the narrator's alienation. The economics of his situation are another part. Having returned home from Seattle and Tacoma after his failures there, he must face reservation economics, which are just as dire.

The narrator has gone to live at home, which is really his only logical alternative as he has no source of income, from all the readers know from the novel. Extended families are also quite common on the reservation, according to McFee's study; he observes, "...sharing and generosity survived in the 1940s and that the 'drain of the 'have-nots' upon the 'haves' has the effect of limiting the economic progress of ambitious individuals' and possibly was 'inhibiting the desire of fullbloods of extensive family connections to achieve material success'" (101). After Teresa marries Lame Bull and he becomes proprietor of the farm, she tells the narrator, "There isn't enough for you here... You would do well to start looking around" (*Winter* 22). In short, there is little at the farm that will support him in economic independence; he gets thirty dollars for helping to mow the alfalfa and the bluejoint, which he immediately blows during his binge in Havre. The narrator, much like Raymond Long Knife and the transient laborers that McFee wrote about in his study, is living from hand to mouth and drinking up most of the money he makes. Teresa shows considerable impatience with the narrator at this point: "'You're too sensitive. There's

nothing wrong with being an Indian. If you can do the job, what difference does it make?" This, one can imagine, is a question that the narrator would bitterly like to answer (*Winter* 20). The question only makes it more poignantly obvious how bad the narrator's position, as well as the position of most Blackfeet, truly is. He has no hope for the future; as McFee observes, "White-oriented activities are directed toward future progress, an end that the Indian-oriented find unrealistic. Past experiences have provided no basis for optimism for the future" (102). I would argue with McFee that it is not necessarily the *Indian-oriented* that find planning for the future unrealistic; he cites several cases in his own study of Blackfeet who have pursued asserting their ethnic identity and still managing to succeed in the white-oriented world. I would agree, however, that it requires far greater effort for them to do so, and this can be so disheartening that many simply give up. This is obviously the case with the narrator, but it would be a stretch at this point to call the narrator Indian-oriented (given McFee's definition of his own term), as he shows little interest at that time in his ethnic background.

In a way, it would be quite difficult for the narrator to have any sort of interest in his native culture. Mose died when the narrator was twelve; First Raise detached himself from the family at that point and spent his time in reservation bars. In one tragic car accident the narrator effectively lost all of his male relatives. In horse-era Blackfeet society, the division of labour and property was based upon gender, and men and women had separate secret societies and social groups as well (McClintock 234-235 and Wissler 28-30). In traditional Blackfeet culture it was considered quite acceptable for a man to go live with his wife's band if the man chose to do so, and there was no system of patronymics among the Blackfeet prior to federal government paperwork<sup>2</sup>. Nevertheless, the male predominated among the Blackfeet. Men chose the names of children, had the options of polygamy, divorce, and wife beating, and owned most of the property that a couple possessed (basically all the woman got to keep was her bride price and products she made with her own hands); in short, the society was male-centered and the male had

most of the privileges. Consequently, because the genders *were* so divided, only a male could educate a male about his gender-specific duties, such as hunting, game-playing, war-parties, etc. Of the rearing of male children in horse-era Blackfeet society, McFee notes,

Boys were told to be brave, to be good fighters, able to defend themselves against their peers and to protect younger children. They were praised for skills and daring, even for sexual exploits. [Boys and girls] were rewarded with praise when they achieved, and punished with sarcasm and gossiped about when they misbehaved or failed. These sanctions contributed to *a developing concern with their own identity...*

(43; italics mine)

McFee also confesses to having the sense that the Blackfeet traditionally were "...much concerned with self..." (44). Association with some relative would have helped to develop this sense, or at least develop it in a stronger and healthier way in the narrator. In the present, when Blackfeet culture is no longer built around their former economic base, the buffalo, and their primary mode of transportation, the horse, having a male to teach about culture is not as intensely important--but it would still have an impact<sup>3</sup>. First Raise had attempted to teach the narrator when he was a child some important things, such as his heritage. It was First Raise who took the narrator to visit his grandfather, Yellow Calf. First Raise also clearly involved himself in the raising of his children, so the narrator and Mose may have learned other things from him as well, and First Raise's plans to go hunting in Glacier Park stood as an example of traditional culture (it resembles a war party: horse-stealing, and hunting, all traditional duties of the brave and respected Blackfeet male of the pre-reservation era). When First Raise leaves the family, the narrator loses this teaching.

Even in terms of general culture, the narrator can find no examples or teachers at home. His grandmother would be an excellent source of cultural information, but she was deliberately shunned by her band and so fails to tell her full story, trying to keep the narrator and Mose stuck in the gloried past: "The old lady never mentioned [Doagie]



perhaps for fear the image of Standing Bear would die in me" (*Winter* 38). She fails to present her band complete with its faults as well as its strengths, and while the narrator would gain an image of life for the Blackfeet circa 1876, he would not have the complete picture. Teresa cannot help the narrator either, as she would have to be from the boarding-school generation: she would have been caught in the U.S. government's attempts at assimilation.

Prior to 1934, when the Indian Reorganization Act was passed after the "monumental" Meriam Report was published, Native Americans-- and particularly the Blackfeet, among others-- were dependent upon the government for subsistence rations and living money (McFee 55). The government was convinced that the best way to make Native Americans independent was to turn them into hard-working American-style farmers. McFee notes the speech of one senator, recorded in the 1886 *Congressional Record*, in which the senator suggests that by allowing "the aggressive and enterprising Anglo-Saxon" to create farms side-by-side with the Native Americans, and Native Americans would be compelled by example alone to model their lives on the hard-working Anglo-Saxon (49). This sort of statement was somewhat typical of the thinking of the time, and if Anglo-Saxons weren't allowed to be the next door neighbors of the Native Americans, then everything else the government could possibly do to instill the example of white industry in order to end the dependency period would be done. This included the eradication of native cultural activity: "Sun dances, Indian mourning, Indian medicine, beating of the tom-tom, gambling, wearing of Indian costumes...selling, trading, exchanging or giving away anything issued to them have been prohibited, while other less pernicious practices, such as horse-racing, face-painting, etc. are discouraged" (McFee 52). Edward Lazarus, in his document on Lakota legal struggles, made note of the conversion phenomenon as well: "With characteristic evangelical fervor, the nation focused its considerable missionary power on the one race it considered worthy of salvation. With an American God, American education, American laws, American

homesteads, and in the end, American citizenship [which, oddly enough, was not established until 1924] , the Indian would finally become truly human" (Lazarus 97). It becomes particularly clear, when reading comments of European Americans from this period, how much in danger of eradication numerous ethnic groups truly were-- not merely in a physical sense, but in a cultural sense.

The mission and federal boarding and day schools played a large part in breaking up the various Native American societies. Children were frequently not even allowed to return home for vacations; students were punished and demoralized for perpetuating societal customs. Hair was cut short and women were made to wear stockings and short dresses, and the men uniforms (Young Bear 137). "Head shaving and even shackling with a ball and chain were common punishments for Indian pupils who ran away or spoke in their native tongue," Lazarus observes (103). In other schools, children were locked in sheds, beaten with rulers, paddled or whipped for speaking their native tongue. As Severt Young Bear, an Oglala Lakota, relates, "After a while the network of the family and how it teaches you and raises you and supports you was lost. After a while of this, you lose the respect of kinship because it's not around you" (137). Teresa, the narrator's mother, would have been part of this system; LaVonne Ruoff asserts, "Teresa combines her mother's solemn dignity and fierce determination to survive with her own alienation from Blackfeet traditions. Because she rejected these in favor of acculturation, she is alienated both from the beliefs of her mother and from the dreams and desires of her first husband and sons" ("Alienation" 110). The boarding-school phenomenon and the cultural eradication policies would have had great effect on subsistence cultures such as that of the Blackfeet, because their economic system, the buffalo, was lost and they had no other systems with which to replace it; consequently these cultures (ie. most of the Plains nations) would have been subject to the policies of the government to a far greater extent because they were dependent on the government for their survival. Tribes who were already centered around agriculture as their economic base, such as the Laguna, seemed to be affected to a lesser

extent. It should also be noted here that the Laguna were never forced to leave their original tribal lands; they have always lived in Laguna, and were never moved, unlike the Blackfeet, so that their cultural traditions to stay more intact. The Blackfeet have lost more.

According to the narrator, "My mother was a Catholic and sprinkled holy water in the corners of her house before lightning storms. She drank with the priest from Harlem, a round man with distant eyes, who refused to set foot on the reservation. He never buried Indians in their family graveyards; instead, he made them come to him, to his church, his saints and holy water, his feuding eyes" (*Winter* 4-5). The narrator's contemptuous tone towards his mother's Catholic, white-oriented associations indicates that he doesn't buy into what she *can* teach him. She is incapable of teaching him much about the culture of the Blackfeet because she would have been growing up during the cultural eradication policy period. Her mother was living with Doagie then and it seems doubtful that she would have taught Teresa much more about the Blackfeet than she taught her grandsons. Doagie would have known nothing to teach her; the rest of the Blackfeet community would probably have rejected the family because of the grandmother's shameful life choices. Blackfeet culture relies on shaming for discipline, according to Wissler, McClintock, and McFee; this shows when Ferdinand Horn's wife employs her finely-honed sense of *schadenfreude* to needle the narrator and shame him into chasing his "wife."

The narrator's lack of cultural identity in terms of the Blackfeet and/or Gros Ventres is made clear by his affair of Agnes. Agnes is Cree, a traditional enemy of the Blackfeet. The Cree originally had the earliest contact with whites and acted as middlemen for white traders and guides for hunters, traders and soldiers ; the Cree waged war on their traditional enemies in order to move to the west to trap beaver, and their conflict with the Blackfeet was particularly harsh ("History" 170). The Blackfeet were famous for

their fierceness and opposition towards whites, whereas the Cree welcomed trade with them. The narrator himself knows the Blackfeet's view of the Cree:

My grandmother, before she quit talking, had told me how Crees never cared for anybody but themselves. Crees drank too much and fought with other Indians in bars, though they had never fought on the battlefield. She told me how Crees were good only for the white men who came to slaughter Indians. Crees had served as scouts for the mounted soldiers and had learned to live like them, drink like them, and the girls had opened their thighs to the Long Knives.

*(Winter 33)*

Even Teresa, who is in favor of assimilation, hasn't much respect for Agnes; she tells the narrator that Agnes has left the family ranch, where she lived for three weeks, while the narrator was on a bender, protesting, "What did you expect me to do? I have your grandmother to look after, and she is young-- Cree!" (*Winter 3*). Yet the narrator is so separated from Blackfeet culture that he does not care that Agnes is Cree. The author may be indulging his own sense of humour here, as well- the Blackfeet used to buy love medicine from the Cree; however, the narrator can not get any love from the Cree girl, despite his having, in a sense, paid the fee (McClintock 190-191).

Ultimately, the narrator has lost all possible resources for transmission of Blackfeet culture. His father, in a practical sense, abandons the family; his brother has died; his mother has nothing that she can teach him; his grandmother cannot or will not; Lame Bull comes too late in the narrator's life, and is furthermore far too interested in white-oriented values, such as acquisitiveness, as seen by Lame Bull's happiness in his proprietorship of the ranch. The narrator attempts to assimilate into the community and finds that solution unpalatable and unpractical, as well as being nearly impossible given the obstacles with which he is presented. However, he will soon begin a process that will return him to some of his cultural values; part of the journey is unseen, the rest is chosen.

William Thackeray contends that the narrator is undergoing a modern-day vision quest in the Gros Ventre tradition. The narrator lives near a Gros Ventre reservation, which William Thackeray identifies as Fort Belknap Reservation, where Welch's Gros Ventre grandparents lived and where Welch occasionally visited. The priest's letter to Teresa is addressed to Dodson, which is three miles from the northeastern corner of the Fort Belknap Reservation; thus the narrator would live surrounded by Gros Ventres, and Thackeray thus believes that Gros Ventre customs would have a great influence on the narrator. The narrator is thirty-two years old, an age that Welch chose deliberately:

I wanted situations that almost any Indian would experience, especially an Indian young man, especially in his late twenties or early thirties. That's a period when a lot of Indian young men have been drinking and they have a crisis point about whether they're going to be drunkards falling in the gutter or whether they're going to pull themselves out. That's a transition point for a lot of Indian young men.

(O'Connell 63)

Thirty-two is also a significant age within Gros Ventre culture; Thackeray notes, "At 32 years of age, the crucial test for mature manhood began. Occasionally, shortly before this age or somewhat after, the Gros Ventre young man faced the critical tests by which he could maintain a *mature man's name*....only after passing through the initiation rite begun at age thirty-two could the man gain acceptance as a *mature male member* of the tribe" (Thackeray 62; emphasis mine). As Thackeray points out, the narrator is therefore just the age to begin these critical tests for his manhood and development. The fact that the narrator is thirty-two is mentioned at least four times within the novel, which would seem to confirm the importance of his age. The narrator is indeed nameless and furthermore is referred to by most older people in the text as a boy, a epithet that he apparently resents, given the bitter way in which he counters this naming<sup>4</sup>. For instance, when Teresa takes the narrator to task for destroying a shirt, Lame Bull says, "Leave the *boy* alone...I was plenty wild myself when I was his age" (*Winter* 71; emphasis mine). The narrator

responds, "I'm thirty-two," and he muses, "Sometimes I had to tell myself" (*Winter* 71). At another point in the novel, a bartender asks the narrator, "You're Teresa First Raise's boy," and the narrator responds, "I'm thirty-two" (*Winter* 56). This answer could be characterized as somewhat testy, especially given the relatively direct and benign answers that the narrator gave the bartender prior to this question, the snappy answers that the narrator gives after this question, and the indirect nature of the reply itself. The narrator would, in traditional Gros Ventre and Blackfeet cultures, have been trained for his life by his male relatives, but as previously mentioned, he was deprived of his male relatives when he was twelve. It would seem as that as Thackeray contends, the narrator is a likely candidate to begin the initiation test for manhood.

Thackeray cites Tom Shakespeare, Arapaho informant on Gros Ventre culture, and John M. Cooper, an anthropologist who studied the Gros Ventre, when identifying the steps to the rite for the passage to manhood:

1. sacrifice, usually occurring over a period of many years, and involving 'that which a person values most in all the world';
2. 'crying for pity' or debasing oneself, occasionally torturing oneself, so that God will look upon one with pity;
3. 'seeking a grandfather,' who might not be related by blood to the individual initiate, but who would serve as his spiritual guide;
4. acceptance of the sacrifice one has made or been compelled to make;
5. ritual despair or the death of hope, involving often literally hoping for or desiring physical death;
6. ritual cleansing, which traditionally involved the sweat bath;
7. visionary or mystic insight by the initiate into himself and into the nature of the world; and
8. acceptance of the significance of one's visionary insight to the conduct of one's life

(63).

When looking at this list of steps, the tremendous investment that the text has made in Gros Ventre *and* Blackfeet culture becomes clear. Thackeray tends to stress the Gros Ventre aspect of the novel to the exclusion of the Blackfeet, and I believe that this is

unrealistic and wrong. The narrator and his family (with the exception of *Lame Bull*, as it is never stated what tribe he belongs to) are Blackfeet, and it is Blackfeet tribal history and customs-- of the little that he *does* know and practice--with which he is familiar. When following Thackeray's model, the spiritual guide that the narrator seeks is *Yellow Calf*, who is also a Blackfeet. Since this novel was written, Welch has made several of his main characters in his subsequent novels *Blackfeet*, and he has written a fictional historical novel of the Blackfeet; it would seem that he might be a bit more emotionally invested in the Blackfeet than the *Gros Ventre*, and under those circumstances, it seems a mistake to ignore the Blackfeet culture in the novel's interpretations completely.

Thackeray's steps do parallel the novel's structure, although I would not go so far as to believe that the narrator is consciously following this pattern; I believe that the narrator seeks to achieve some of these steps, but with other reasons in mind for seeking them. The narrator definitely resists the 'sacrifice' of his brother and father. "Crying for pity," however, is something at which the narrator excels. In his interview with *Laura Coltelli*, Welch states, "Other people have told me these things [the crying for pity ritual] exist, and in a sense I know kind of what people are getting at. [The narrator is] on a kind of search for something that will give some meaning to [his life]...I don't think...the narrator...knows particularly what he's looking for. But maybe the search itself will reveal something that will give meaning to his life" (Coltelli 187). The search itself is an attempt to achieve a cultural identity, and although the narrator may not find great answers from his quest, it does allow him to connect with that identity. Ultimately, the quest will give meaning to his life more than anything else that he does, such as a career (he can't have one), or a job (he can't get one), or a relationship (it's impossible to have a successful one of any sort when one is not psychologically stable, as evidenced by the narrator's state of affairs with his family at the novel's opening). The quest is a type of ritual, and the function of ritual is "...to allay anxiety and prepare the individual...to act--of itself gives the ritualist...power over others" (Gonzalez and McCommon 42). In short, the quest will

enable the narrator to truly begin taking the chances and making the choices that make up living, rather than being stuck in stasis as he has been.

The narrator is so mired in inertia that he does not really choose to begin his quest, when he begins the "crying for pity" phase by going to search for Agnes. He is teased by Ferdinand Horn's wife, his mother and Lane Bull, all of whom expect him to go after his "wife," especially since she has stolen his property and is supposedly running around Havre with a white man. The narrator agrees to go after her, but he seems completely apathetic about it. He goes off to find her, helping her half-brother Dougie to roll the white man Agnes is seeing. Dougie runs away without giving the information that the narrator requires and he hides himself in case the man he rolled with Dougie comes after him. He proceeds to get sidetracked from his search for Agnes by the comic "airplane man," almost without a thought; the narrator doesn't make any great efforts to find her. When he finally does, he gives her advice that he knows is bad; he advises her to take up shorthand, telling Agnes, "Yes, you're young. I was talking to a woman, it's a good living..." (*Winter* 113). The woman he was talking to, however, was the desolate Malvina, who attended Haskell Indian School in Lawrence, Kansas, for two years, learning shorthand. Malvina never even got a job (*Winter* 81). This section has great significance for several reasons: it underlines the desperate economic situation on the reservation and of Native Americans; it shows once again how difficult it is to be white-oriented; it highlights the strong comic elements of the novel; and it also serves as an indicator of just how meaningless everything is to the narrator; he's saying anything that comes to mind.

The narrator also has a series of encounters with women who mean nothing to him. He is always drunk when he sleeps with them, except the last time he has sex with Marlene. He leaves them with perfect indifference, or cannot even remember for sure whether or not he has actually slept with them, as with the barmaid from Malta. After he has spent the night with Marlene, the woman who attended to him when he was punched



out by Agnes' new love interest, he abuses her. He slaps her and pins her to the bed, sitting on her,

And I was staring at the sobbing woman with the same lack of emotion, the same curiosity, as though I were watching a bug floating motionless down an irrigation ditch, not yet dead but having decided upon death. I slid off her. Everything had gone out of me, and I felt the kind of peace that comes over one when he is alone, when he no longer cares for warmth, or sunshine, or possessions, or even a woman's body, so yielding and powerful.

(*Winter* 123)

His behaviour regarding Marlene and his reaction to her tears are those of a curiously disconnected person. He has failed to achieve meaning via sexual encounters. This could also be viewed as a step in the manhood ritual: for both the Blackfeet and the Gros Ventres, men were encouraged to achieve as many sexual encounters as possible (although, ironically, women were exhorted from girlhood to remain virtuous) (Wissler 9 and Flannery 157-158). Thus another method can be discounted as a means of returning to himself.

Having exhausted every remedy he can try in town to resolve his psychological crisis, the narrator decides to leave town, shortly after the airplane man is taken away by the FBI, and the narrator has met Agnes, been beaten up by her boyfriend, and beaten up Marlene himself. "I had had enough of Havre, enough of town, of walking home, hung over, beaten up, or both. I had had enough of the people...but mostly, I had had enough of myself. I wanted to lose myself...have my shadow erased, myself along with it" (*Winter* 125). Before he finds Marlene, he sits on the steps of a hotel and muses, "Again I felt that helplessness of being in a world of stalking white men. But those Indians down at Gable's were no bargain either. I was a stranger to both and both had beaten me" (*Winter* 120).

Like Betonie in *Ceremony*, the narrator is not blaming whites for all of his problems; Betonie warns Tayo, "Nothing is that simple...you don't write off all the white people, just

like you don't trust all the Indians" (*Ceremony* 128). The problem with the white people in both novels, and the Blackfeet and Gros Ventres and Lagunas who are white-oriented, is that they are thinking as the white doctors instructed Tayo to think in order to get well: "...he had to think only of himself, and not about the others, that he would never get well as long as he used words like 'we' and 'us'" (*Ceremony* 125). Both characters are sick because of their alienation, their lack of cultural identity; to identify with a culture is to align with a group thought, which means also to think *of* the group. The Indians at Gable's and the whites that the narrator meets in Havre think only of themselves: the airplane man, for instance, is so self-absorbed that he can not even identify his daughter. The narrator cannot identify with this sort of thinking, even though he has tried to lose himself. In the bar in Malta, the narrator overhears the second suit say: "I don't understand these people around here," which echoes his feelings perfectly--so much so that he repeats it to the barmaid (*Winter* 48).

As mentioned, the narrator has failed to obliterate his memories and wishes only to obliterate himself when he decides to leave Havre. He sees a Randolph Scott movie poster of a film that he and his brother Mose had discussed when Mose was alive--the day that he and Mose had brought the cows in from the range, the first half of the accident story. Later, when the narrator is hit by Agnes' boyfriend and is knocked unconscious against a parking meter, he experiences another memory of Mose. The narrator's usual routines cannot even make him forget his problems, much less provide him with a method of solving them. Disgusted with himself, unable to find an identity at home, in town, or the big cities of Seattle and Tacoma, he returns home from Havre, noting as he leaves that "There were no mirrors anywhere" (*Winter* 125). He cannot see himself as he is.

Upon returning home, the narrator begins on his road to a cure, a possible method of healing that he has not tried before. Louise Barnet comments that, "To survive psychically in an environment [ie. the white-oriented world] that offers him nothing positive and much that is threatening, he turns unconsciously to ritual" (123). Remember

that ritual gives one *power over others*, as well as impelling an individual to take action (Gonzalez and McCommon 42). Although the narrator at no time discusses his choices, it seems unlikely that some of these decisions, such as his visit to Yellow Calf, an elder, are wholly unconscious. This security is a good indication of the narrator's nascent recovery. The narrator doesn't mind when the professor man who gave him a ride to White Bear asks to take his picture; he is seemingly more secure in himself already, simply by deciding to leave Havre and its distractions. Part of being a more mature Gros Ventre or Blackfeet is being secure enough in oneself to be able to laugh at him or herself--as having one's picture taken as a tourist curiosity would certainly warrant (Wissler 29, Young Bear 169, and Flannery 196). He eats the peach that the sick white girl gives him, even though it tastes bitter and metallic, "...more out of loyalty toward the sick girl" (*Winter* 131). When the narrator gets home, he takes a bath; following Thackeray's model, this would be the sixth step of the ritual cleansing. It is a modern version of the sweat bath; modern Native Americans of many of the Plains tribes, as well as members of the Native American Church, still like to sweat today, but then building a sweat lodge can be expensive and usually requires help. This act of cleansing has a double action in returning the narrator's identity or rather building him a new one in that the bath brings back memories of his father and brother. The narrator speaks of the layer he is removing during his ablution: "[The dirt he removed while bathing as a child] was a different kind of dirt--dust from the roads, chaff from the hayfields--not the invisible kind that coats a man who has been to town" (*Winter* 133). During his bath, the narrator finds that "It was good to be home. The wariness I had felt earlier vanished from my bones" (*Winter* 133). He has completed a step in his journey to a knowledge of self and has been rewarded with pleasurable feelings and memories: proof that he is achieving order and a reason to keep going on the path he has chosen.

The narrator's next step is to seek an elder or a spiritual guide. His grandmother has died, and she cannot aid him in his quest; in pre-reservation Gros Ventre and Blackfeet

cultures a man would be more appropriate in any case. From a more modern perspective it is only reasonable that he should seek knowledge of his family when a relative has died. To display interest in one's ancestry is to display interest in one's ethnic identity, and by extension (if that ethnic group is a minority one that has maintained some or all of its unique features) one's cultural identity. The first time the narrator independently seeks out Yellow Calf, whom his father took him to visit one winter when he was "a squirt," he does not appreciate Yellow Calf and his abilities. The narrator mocks Yellow Calf and shows him no respect; although teasing *is* a traditional part of Gros Ventre pre-reservation culture, there is no serious deference shown by the narrator towards the old man to balance out the ribbing. The narrator does not take Yellow Calf any gifts, which is a value held by modern as well as pre-reservation Blackfeet, Gros Ventre, Crow and several other Plains groups (*Custer* 205). He promises to bring gifts the next time he comes, but his error has already been made. Thackeray points out that there is a great parallel between Yellow Calf and Na'pi, the trickster/culture hero of the Blackfeet, whose name in English means "old man"--which is how the narrator frequently refers to or addresses Yellow Calf; this would only add to Yellow Calf's value and power as a spiritual guide (71). Further, the holy colour of the Blackfeet, yellow, the color of the sun, is part of Yellow Calf's name, which enhances his image as a holy man (Thackeray 71). Yet the narrator fails to take Yellow Calf's advice, as Thackeray notes, and "...he even seems to fail to understand that he has been provided with a medicine gift at all" (66).

The second time the narrator seeks out Yellow Calf, he has come ostensibly to inform the old man of the grandmother's death, but more importantly to seek out his oral history and traditions. Intellectually, the narrator is not even sure that Yellow Calf knew her at all, and he asks Yellow Calf if he did know the narrator's grandmother in order to prompt him to speak--and to confirm what must be a strong hunch for the narrator. In the course of the second visit, the narrator respects the present-day conventions and presents Yellow Calf with a bottle of wine immediately upon arrival, as he should (*Custer* 205).

Consciously or unconsciously, the narrator is also respecting a pre- and early-reservation Gros Ventre custom as well; according to Regina Flannery, "Similarly, it was not at all unusual for successful young hunters to seek out old people to share in some of the spoils, --just as in these later times a bottle of whiskey was occasionally given to old persons by the young" (196). The narrator learns, with his questions based on his amazement at the revelations given, his oral history and his familial heritage: Yellow Calf is his grandfather. Critics who have written on the novel agree across the board that the narrator experiences epiphany--McFarland even suggested that it is Joycean because of the horse's fart--when he realizes this:

I thought for a moment.

Bird farted.

And it came to me, as though it were riding one moment of the gusting wind, as though Bird had had it in him all the time and had passed it to me in that one instant of corruption.

'Listen, old man,' I said. 'It was you--you were old enough to hunt!'  
(*Winter* 158)

The narrator begins to laugh, "...at first quietly, with neither bitterness nor humor. It was the laughter of one who understands a moment in his life, of one who has been let in on the secret through luck and circumstance...I laughed, as the secret unfolded itself....And the wave behind my eyes broke" (*Winter* 158). The happiness that the narrator feels, along the broken "wave," signify the release of tension that the narrator feels as a result of knowing truly who he is, in multidimensional ways: he knows now that he is full-blood, he knows he is pure Blackfeet, he knows who his grandfather is, and he is aware of his family history. The narrator notes that "The answer had come to me as if by instinct...as though it was his blood in my veins that had told me" (*Winter* 160). Truly his *blood* has told him; his grandfather's story has confirmed his instinctual belief--Welch makes use of an excellent pun here. The narrator's good humour should be expected, as he has also gained

a male relative, someone with whom he can associate: Lame Bull is good in his way, but as previously mentioned, he is just as much a part of the assimilationist white-oriented boarding-school generation as Teresa is.

At the same time that the narrator has recovered his traditions, he has by no means returned to pre-reservation thinking. When Yellow Calf explains why the narrator's grandmother, Standing Bear's widow, was exiled by her husband's band, the narrator is mystified. Yellow Calf tells the narrator:

She had not been with us more than a month or two, maybe three. *You must understand the thinking.* In that time the soldiers came, the people had to leave their home up near the mountains, then the starvation and the death of their leader. She had brought them bad medicine.'

'But you--you don't think that.'

'It was apparent,' he said.

(*Winter* 154; emphasis mine)

The narrator, however, can simply not comprehend a culture attributing such power to a beautiful woman merely because she was beautiful. "I tried to understand the medicine, the power that directed the people to single out a young woman, to leave her to fend for herself in the middle of a cruel winter. *I tried to understand the thinking*, the hatred of the women, the shame of the men" (*Winter* 155; emphasis mine). Finally, he cannot put himself back in time: "I couldn't understand the medicine, her beauty" (*Winter*, 156). The narrator is too much a product of his own generation to comprehend such beliefs; as Michael Dorris asserts, "Native American societies are not one-dimensional and fixated on days gone by. Native Americans live, in every sense of the word, in the twentieth century..." (155-156). Neither Blackfeet nor Gros Ventre society operates in this sense any more and even once the narrator is completely in step with it he would not be able to think this way. His return to tradition and his resumption of Blackfeet identity does not necessarily mean a return to the previous era.

Acceptance of his brother's death, and of the memories of the accident that caused it, are further evidence of the narrator's psychological recovery. After he digs his grandmother's grave in the family graveyard where Mose is buried the narrator experiences a flood of recollection. The reader then learns how the narrator's winter began: "...the movie exploded whitely in my brain, and I saw the futile lurch of the car as the brake lights popped...the horse spinning so that its rear end smashed into the door, the smaller figure flying slowly over the top of the car to land with the hush of a stuffed doll" (*Winter* 142). As he rides Bird, the horse that was being used during the accident, he mentally forgives Bird: "No, don't think it was your fault--when that calf broke, you reacted as they trained you. I should compliment you on your eyes and your quickness. I didn't even see it break..." (*Winter* 146). With the narrator's forgiveness of Bird, he can allow himself to finish his grieving process for Mose, and possibly he can allow himself forgiveness as well.

Further, the narrator attempts to exonerate himself by saving the cow with the white-rimmed eye from the muddy slough<sup>5</sup>. He sacrifices Bird in the process by overtaxing his energy. He doesn't even particularly *want* to save the cow; as he says, "...she means nothing to me," yet he feels compelled to rescue her anyway (*Winter* 168). Welch leaves the fate of the cow unresolved. Critics are unsure whether or not the cow survived; Peter Beidler believes that the cow died, whereas Paula Gunn Allen believes that the cow was pulled out in time--but as Kay Sands points out, "The attempt, the process, is the important thing" (Beidler and Ruoff 163). As previously mentioned, it was customary for grieving Blackfeet males to go on long journeys, or even earlier in Blackfeet history to go on the warpath aimlessly (ie. not caring if one returns alive and planning on killing anyone that one meets, as opposed to having a specific raiding plan). Another common grieving custom for Blackfeet *and* Gros Ventre mourners was to go out to a hill or distant place from the camp at sunrise and weep and gash themselves until they were finally urged to return to camp and resume normal life by another member of the tribe (McClintock 150).

The narrator's struggle to save the cow, the agent of his brother's death, indicates that he is recovered or finally recovering from his brother's death. It also involves great physical effort, a more pain-free, modernized version of the gashing of the arms and legs; it's a comic kind of memorial to Mose. After the narrator has completed the attempt--whether one believes he has stopped because the cow has died or has been retrieved--he lays on his back on the ground, as a thunderstorm begins. He reflects on his father and brother, and for the first time in the novel, it is with a sense of peace. As he lays there he meditates, "Some people...will never know how pleasant it is to be distant in a clean rain, the driving rain of a summer storm. It's not like you'd expect, nothing like you'd expect" (*Winter* 172). Rain is a sign of cleansing, and it was also common for mourners returning to Blackfeet camps to bathe themselves and resume regular clothing. Paula Gunn Allen observes,

More important is the fact that the narrator takes an action and does something; he commits himself. He hates this animal but he risks his leg, if nothing more. He has to pull her out. He blames the stupidity of the cow (or her predecessor) for Mose's death, but he lets go of all that and goes into the mud. However stupid she is, she still needs his help.

(Beidler and Ruoff 163)

This is another, and possibly more important reason, as Allen says, why the narrator's attempt to save the cow is crucial. Risking his leg is a sacrifice to his brother of a sort, as well.

When the narrator has allowed himself to finish mourning his brother's--and father's--death, he has become psychologically more healthy, and in a position to find a cultural and ethnic identity. The definition of *ethnic*, discussed earlier in this paper, was a collection of people who shared a common *ancestry* and religion. When the narrator found the identity of his grandfather, having deliberately sought out that information, he has begun on a path to developing a cultural identity. In Blackfeet tradition, ancestor guides were sought out for power building, a crucial step towards becoming a warrior and a man



in the tribe. He has also followed- in a modern version- the Gros Ventre model for manhood. Both of these tasks are further steps towards developing an ethnic and cultural identity. The narrator intensifies his search for cultural identity from this time onward.

Even prior to his search for his ancestry, he displays his growing concern with Blackfeet tradition when he returns home from Havre and argues with Teresa about his grandmother's burial. When he is examining the folded blankets and furniture that she used to use, he muses that he has never seen any of her belongings. He reflects that these things "...would have been buried with her in the old days. Now, almost a hundred years later, she would be buried the way she was born, with nothing" (*Winter* 132). Teresa is concerned that her mother get the priest from Harlem to bury her and to have her mother made up at the mortician. The narrator worries that his grandmother will have something buried with her, and he is equally concerned that she should be buried on the family plot on the ranch. He even argues with Teresa about it: "Why don't we just bury her here, where the rest of them are?" (*Winter* 134). The narrator cannot resist mocking Teresa about the priest and her non-traditional beliefs, carefully pointing out that the old lady was different: "It would be easier to bury her here...she didn't even go to church" (*Winter* 134). Teresa had already decided to bury her mother at home, for unknown reasons of her own. At the funeral, which is imbued with Welch's great comic sense, Teresa begins to moan and fall on her knees--presumably to pray like a good Christian, to make up for the absence of the Harlem priest who "refus[es] to bury Indians on their own plots, who refus[es] to set foot on the reservation" (*Winter* 59). Lame Bull makes a ludicrous speech about an old lady who "never gave anybody any crap," which shows how little he knew about the hundred-year-old who carried a paring knife in her legging in hopes of avenging herself on Agnes, who is Cree and therefore enemy. It is the narrator, her grandson, who seems to understand her the most as she was: he throws her tobacco pouch in her grave with her coffin. Wissler noted, "Persons usually make requests of their families that certain personal belongings are buried with them" (31). McClintock observes, "[Blackfeet

tribal members] were dressed according to their station when in this life, because they were believed to go to the Sand Hills in the clothes with which they were buried. All articles needed for the journey were placed beside the grave. A man would need his pipe, saddle weapons and blankets and the personal articles he valued most" (149-150).

McClintock doesn't mention particularly how women's bodies were disposed of, but it seems likely that they were buried, placed on the scaffold or in the tree with their personal belongings as well. In this way, she is buried in the traditional manner that she would probably prefer, and the narrator shows that he has gained a sense of kinship, of family, of tradition and culture. The winter in his blood has thawed.

Welch has expressed doubt that the narrator has completed his growth at the end of the novel's action. "In a sense I can't see [the narrator]...having finally received a vision; maybe...when he tries to pull the cow out of the mud, when he learns who his grandfather is, has some small growth period; he seems to grow a little bit as a person, but not a lot, and those aren't the kind of visions upon which he can conduct his life from that point on. So I'm not sure that my supposed vision quest in those novels came to the kind of fruition that a true vision quest comes to," Welch observes (Coltelli 187-188). However Severt Young Bear states that the stages of development in Lakota life--he defines seven of them--take time to master, approximating a length of three to five years for each (123-124). Lakota belief and practice seems to closely resemble that of the Gros Ventres, based on the information given in Flannery's collection. Therefore, although the narrator may not have experienced a great vision, he could well have begun on the road to a great vision. In his history *Killing Custer*, Welch recounts the story of a modern day elder, Ted Rising Sun, a Northern Cheyenne:

He was a war hero in both the Second World War and the Korean War... But like many Indians who fought bravely for their country...Rising Sun couldn't handle the pressure of his war-hero status and hit the skids. He became a skid-row drunk in a couple of cities, literally waking up in the gutter on occasion. He lost several years of his life to cheap wine, until he

bottomed out and began the *slow painful climb* back to the world of his people.

(209; emphasis mine)

Rising Sun's story indicates that it is not easy to regain the path to traditional culture, even if one was familiar or educated in the culture before one left it, and Welch is obviously aware of this. Thus the narrator has completed a somewhat circular path, although he is still moving forward. He has moved back into his culture and he is aware of some of its history, and he seems committed to learning more.

Whereas Welch's story recounts the story of a modern Native American, Leslie Marmon Silko's novel *Ceremony* goes back to the post-Second War World period. Her main character, Tayo, has experiences that eerily echo Rising Sun's, perhaps with good reason:: as Welch notes, although it is "such an agonizing story" it is nevertheless "such a typical story of Indian war heroes" (Custer 209). Silko herself has stated that she has knowledge of stories regarding several war-heroes at Laguna who underwent experiences similar to those of Rising Sun. The novel is set in Laguna, and most of the culture and traditions presented in the story are Laguna, but the text also owes a debt to Navajo culture in terms of the original ceremony that Betonie alters to perform over Tayo. For the people at Laguna, Acoma and other pueblos, the war presented extra difficulties in that war is not as large a part of their traditional culture as it is with some other nations, such as the Blackfeet or Lakota. Silko has asserted that "The Pueblo people have always concentrated on making things grow, and appreciating things that are alive and natural, because life is so precious in the desert," and this theme is carried throughout the book (Seyersted 26).

Thus Tayo, as a warrior, must undergo the Scalp Ceremony. As Silko points out, the Scalp Ceremony "...was a purification ceremony which was done for warriors, or anybody that might have killed another human being in battle, because of course killing another human being was not taken lightly, it was a very devastating sort of thing, a tremendous thing--" (Seyersted 31). However, for Tayo, as well as for some of the

others, the Scalp Ceremony simply is not enough. Tayo is suffering from a larger sickness: cultural separation that results in a loss of cultural identity. He fails to believe in the traditions of his people--always referred to as *the* people--and for this reason he is ill, because tradition has provided both him and his culture with their order and their universe, which in Laguna culture is really the same thing. Pueblo culture numbers the worlds and the directions and has color correspondences for all of these, as well as numerous other features. Without the culture to provide order, there is no reason for events that happen, especially evil ones (and according to Colleen Kennedy, it is this precise lack of order that is a major preoccupation and theme of twentieth century American literature) so it is easy to see how dire Tayo's (and Laguna's) predicament is.

If Tayo, and the people, have lost their cultural ability to counteract the destructive forces of the twentieth century, which is embodied in ceremony (ritual) and stories, they will be lost to these forces. The people and Betonie, the Navajo holy man, refer to these destructive forces as witchery. It is stressed in the text that Tayo is not the only one in the pueblo who has lost his belief in the traditions and more importantly the identity that tradition gave him; old man Ku'oosh, the Laguna medicine man, tells Tayo, "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, they are not better either" (*Ceremony* 38). Further, it is made clear that whatever happens to Tayo does not happen in a vacuum; everything is interconnected in Pueblo belief. Ku'oosh says to Tayo, "I'm afraid of what will happen to all of us if you and the others don't get well" (*Ceremony* 38). When the story of Tayo's mother, who became a prostitute, is told, it is argued that Tayo's Auntie must save her sister because "...the people felt something deeper: they were losing her, they were losing part of themselves. The older sister [Auntie] had to act; she had to act *for the people*, to get this young girl back" (*Ceremony* 68; emphasis mine). Auntie fails to rescue her sister, however, and so "...when they failed, the humiliation fell on all of them; what happened to

the girl did not happen to her alone, it happened to all of them" (*Ceremony* 69). The people are all affected by this witchery, this separation from culture:

...the old instinct had always been to gather the feelings and opinions that were scattered through the village, to gather them like willow twigs and tie them to into a single prayer bundle that would bring peace to all of them. But now the feelings were twisted, tangled roots, and all the names for the source for this growth were buried under English words, out of reach. And there would be no peace and the people would have no rest until the entanglement had been unwound to the source.

(*Ceremony* 69)

Tayo had not always doubted the traditions; when he was younger he observed the ways of the people. Larry Evers points out that when Josiah, Robert, Rocky and Tayo go hunting and kill a deer, "...Rocky does not want to perform the ritual and Tayo does," and Peter Beidler concurs, "Tayo is closer [to Pueblo ritual] at the beginning than he was at the middle, he was closer in his youth than he was at the beginning of the novel, when he has just come back from World War II" (Sands and Ruoff 67). In the scene that Evers and Beidler speak of, Rocky, Tayo's cousin, prepares to dress the deer, and Tayo takes off his jacket and covers the deer's face. Rocky asks Tayo why he does this, but "Tayo didn't say anything, because they both knew why. The people said you should do that before you gutted the deer. Out of respect" (*Ceremony* 51). Tayo gradually loses this respect, through acculturation and the example of his cousin Rocky, who really holds the role of an older brother in Tayo's life.

Rocky has no respect whatsoever for the traditional ways, and this is emphasized several times in the text. His mother, Auntie, is assimilated and Christian, and is constantly attending church. She is intensely concerned with what the people think about her and is anxious to stop gossip about her family: quite non-traditional values for Laguna, which is highlighted by old Grandma; Grandma loves to gossip, and in Laguna everyone loves to know everyone's business. At one point when Auntie is preparing to go to

church, old Grandma complains, "Church...Ah Thelma, do you have to go there again?" Gossip is at the core of Laguna tradition, yet Auntie fears it; old Grandma points out that she should not care about the gossip, because whoever told such stories could count on having their disgraces being recounted around the pueblo as well (*Ceremony* 89). Clearly Auntie is white-oriented, to use McFee's term, and she has encouraged Rocky, as the epitome of her dreams to success, to become as white-oriented as possible (*Ceremony* 51). As a result, Rocky will not respect the deer with Tayo:

But Rocky was funny about those things. He was an A-student and all-state in football and track. He had to win; he said he was always going to win. So he listened to his teachers, and he listened to the coach. They were proud of him. They told him, 'Nothing can stop you now except one thing: don't let the people at home hold you back.' Rocky understood what he had to do to win in the white outside world. After their first year at boarding school in Albuquerque, Tayo saw how Rocky deliberately avoided the old-time ways. Old Grandma shook her head at him, but he called it superstition, and he opened his textbooks to show her.

(*Ceremony* 51)

When Josiah, Tayo and Rocky's uncle, begins reading a cattle book, and comments that the information that it provides is stupid and says he will have to learn how to raise cattle "that don't eat grass or drink water," Rocky mocks him. "Those books are written by scientists. They know everything that there is to know about beef cattle. That's the trouble with the way people around here have always done things--they never knew what they were doing" (*Ceremony* 76). In making this comment Rocky is completely ignoring the fact that for the Keres Josiah's ideas about cattle are fairly revolutionary as well. Yet Rocky is so tied into the idea of white culture he has no intention of believing in *anything* that comes from an Indian--new or old. Rocky will not even use his names: his baptismal Christian name is Augustine, and Rocky is as close as he wants to get to his Laguna name. In Native American culture--regardless of tribe--names are quite crucial to people--and yet Rocky denies his, another sign of his complete severance from his culture. Finally, Rocky

makes plans to make the severance from Laguna physical as well: "...he was already talking about the places he would live, and the reservation wasn't one of them" (*Ceremony* 77).

Tayo, in addition to living with an example of lack of adherence to culture from his adored older "brother", must also deal with his teachers, who tell him that his culture is based on superstition. As the narrator observes, "He had believed in the stories for a long time, until the teachers at Indian school taught him not to believe in that kind of 'nonsense'" (*Ceremony* 19). He recalls a time when he was in science class, "...when the teacher brought in a tubful of dead frogs, bloated with formaldehyde, and the Navajos all left the room; the teacher said those old beliefs were stupid. The Jemez girl raised her hand and said the people always told the kids not to kill frogs, because the frogs would get angry and send so much rain that there would be floods. The science teacher laughed loudly, for a long time; he even had to wipe tears from his eyes" (*Ceremony* 195). At one point during his childhood, Tayo makes a game out of swatting flies with a willow switch, until Josiah catches him. Tayo, proud of his accomplishments, shows Josiah, who disapproves; Tayo defends himself by saying, "But our teacher said so. She said they are bad and carry sickness" (*Ceremony* 101). The teacher's statement is a delicious irony given Laguna culture, as Josiah gently tells Tayo--and the novel's readers--of the Laguna tradition regarding Fly: "...way back in time immemorial, the mother of the people got angry at them for the way they were behaving. 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" (*Ceremony* 101). However, Tayo learns to forget his teachings and his promises to Josiah when he signs up for the Army with Rocky. It is Tayo's entrance into the army, and the connection with white society, that will introduce him into witchery and complete his denial of his traditions.

While Tayo is in the army, he is ordered to kill a Japanese soldier, and he becomes temporarily insane because he realizes that the soldier is not much different from him in

appearance; he imagines that the soldier is Josiah. Rocky attempts to calm Tayo, and while Tayo is listening to Rocky he "slap[s] at insects *mechanically*"--ie., he does it without thought as the action is deeply imprinted upon his psyche. Yet this action is unnatural for Tayo in more than one sense; Peter Beidler recognizes that "Nothing is more expressive of the distance [Tayo] has been driven from Josiah's principles than the fact that in the war flies have for him come to be those 'bad' things his white teacher told him they were. His response to jungle flies is a white man's response in that it is both destructive and mechanical" (14). Of course, with this action Tayo is not only denying Josiah's principles but also those of the people. Later, when Rocky is wounded, Tayo "...had not been able to endure the flies that had crawled over Rocky; they had enraged him. He had cursed their sticky feet and their wet mouths, and when he could reach them he had smashed them between his hands" (*Ceremony* 102). Tayo and a corporal carry the wounded Rocky to the Japanese prison camp on a blanket and the constant jungle rain impedes their progress so much that Tayo fears for Rocky's life; as a result Tayo "...damned the rain until the words were a chant...all the time he could hear his own voice praying against the rain" (*Ceremony* 12). This is antithetical to Laguna as well- in the intensely dry climate of Laguna, rain means life to crops, animals and people, and it is an event that is prayed for fervently. Despite the fact that Tayo by his own admission "never killed any enemy," Tayo feels sick when he returns stateside, crying and vomiting constantly "for what he had done" (*Ceremony* 14). When he is put in the mental hospital in Los Angeles he feels like smoke; he refers to himself as an invisible one. Paula Gunn Allen notes that,

A warrior in a peace-centered culture must experience total separation from the people. [Tayo] has been prepared for this role by the circumstances of his birth and upbringing; Auntie is especially forceful in propelling him away from the heart of what he is. By virtue of his status as an out-cast, who at the same time is one of the People in his heart, he is able to suffer the ritual of war and dissolution. Only total annihilation of the mundane



self can result in a magic man of sufficient power to carry off the Ceremony which Tayo is embroiled in. At the opening of the story, Tayo is still experiencing this stage of the Ceremony.

(Coltelli 11-12)

Tayo is finally allowed to come home, and he spends all of his time laying in the dark crying and vomiting. Finally, despite the Army doctors' warnings against Indian medicine, old Grandma calls Ku'oosh to give Tayo a Scalp Ceremony. As anticipated by Ku'oosh himself, the Scalp Ceremony does not work, as there are things that traditional medicine cannot cure "since white people came" (*Ceremony* 38). Like the Indians at Gable's in *Winter in the Blood*, and the whites in both novels, these white-oriented people in the novel such as Pinkie and Emo are too self-centered. They no longer think in terms of *the people*, but rather in terms of the *I*, and this is contradictory to Laguna belief and in many ways is contradictory to the Blackfeet view. This is a new disease for the Laguna--and like the vaccines of today that are no longer effective against the new, more resistant strains (measles, mumps, and rubella are good examples of this), a new vaccine, or rather new ritual, must be prepared to combat it. Although Tayo is partially cured, ceasing his continuous vomiting and crying, and becoming capable of leaving the dark room in Auntie's house, he still fears his memories much like the narrator in *Winter in the Blood* (an unnatural position for Native Americans who are generally taught to treasure their past and the stories of it)<sup>6</sup>. Susan Scarberry points out that, "Throughout most of *Ceremony* Tayo struggles not to remember. As the novel unfolds, the protagonist is suspended in a dream-like state, at the mercy of his memories," much like the narrator at the opening of *Winter in the Blood*, who is a "servant to the memory of death" (19, and *Winter* 38). worst of all, Tayo "didn't care anymore if he died"--the antithesis of the Laguna ethical system, Laguna beliefs, and Laguna tradition.

Tayo's return to consciousness leads him to seek to drown his memories with alcohol. Once again, Tayo is waylaid by destructive impulses that are not traditional to his culture. "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...he crawled inside and watched the storm swirling on the outside and he was safe there; the winds of rage could not touch him" (*Ceremony* 40). His forays into drunkenness only serve to keep him farther from psychological health. In between the drunken binges when he, his war buddies Harley and Leroy, and another vet from Laguna, Emo, run "up the line," ie. stopping to drink at every bar on Rt. 66, Tayo watches Auntie's sheep camp and the ruined land. For the witchery has affected not only Tayo and the people but the land as well (or rather the witchery on the land has affected the people): it has not rained in six years, and Josiah's Mexican cattle are missing. The rain is an indication of the neglect by the people of the Laguna culture and the witchery that is going on' Josiah observes that "The earth keeps us going.... You don't swear at [wind, dust, sun, sky and drought]. It's the people, see. They're the ones. The old people used to say that droughts happen when people forget, when people misbehave" (*Ceremony* 46). It is clear how much people have forgotten when Emo speaks: "Look what is here for us. Look. Here's the Indian's mother earth! Old dried-up thing!" (*Ceremony* 25). Tayo becomes angry when he hears this, and he believes that Emo is wrong--testimony to his early training and belief. It no doubt reminds him of the story of Iktoa'ak'o'ya/Reed Woman and Corn Woman, recounted in the text. Yet Tayo himself is still out of tune with his tradition. When Emo taunts Tayo by making inflammatory statements about "this goddamned dried up country" that he wants to trade for the whites' San Diego and women, and playing with the teeth he pried from the mouth of a Japanese soldier, Tayo attempts to beat Emo to death. Since succeeding at this objective would only place Tayo on the same moral plane as Emo from a Laguna viewpoint (violence is destructive), Tayo is nearly as susceptible to the witchery as Emo is--and thus he remains sick. It is this action, and his continued moping, that make the elders decide that Tayo must see Betonie for help or leave the pueblo.

Betonie, as it happens, has a speciality in dealing with "victims tainted by Christianity or liquor" like his grandfather Descheeny. It is Betonie's belief in the importance of changing ceremonies that makes him perfect to start Tayo on the road to his cure. Betonie explains: "At one time, 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" (*Ceremony* 126). Tayo's return to culture requires that he undergo ceremony that Betonie conducts for him; the ceremony, the sandpainting and the story Betonie sings is basically the Coyote Transformation Prototype Ceremony from the Navajo Red Antway/Male Evilway (Bell 58). But this sing is not enough<sup>7</sup>. Tayo must combat the evil, the Destroyers. Although the white people are destructive, Betonie warns Tayo, "Nothing is that simple...you don't write off all the white people, just like you don't trust all the Indians" (*Ceremony* 128). Betonie cautions Tayo that Indians can deal with white people because Indian witchery created white people in the first place, and that the important thing is for Tayo to maintain the shifting balances and harmonies of nature (*Ceremony* 130). Tayo must perform creative acts to counteract the destruction being carried out by the witches. Betonie tells Tayo, "One night or nine nights won't do it any more...the ceremony isn't finished yet" (*Ceremony* 152). Tayo receives clues from Betonie about what he should do next: "Remember these stars...I've seen them and I've seen the spotted cattle; I've seen a mountain and I've seen a woman" (*Ceremony* 152).

The woman that Betonie sees is another crucial part of Tayo's cure. Ts'eh, the woman whom Tayo sleeps with, is important firstly because she is a woman, and Pueblo culture is matriarchal and matrilineal. Ts'eh is also important because she is a *kat'sina* spirit. Finally, she is important because she and Tayo experience love, or rather give love to each other, and love is part of creation, the center of Keres culture. Ts'eh is associated with water (in Keres, *tse* is water) and the mountains, specifically Mount Taylor, which is

called Tse-pi'na in Laguna (Allen 8). Ts'eh tells Tayo that her name is a short name, a nickname for a longer Indian name (Tse-pi'na) and that her last name is Montañño (Spanish for mountaineer). Allen asserts that Ts'eh is "Tse-pi'na, the Western Mountain Woman" (8). A further support for Allen's theory is that when Tayo finds his cattle with Ts'eh, and it has snowed. The storm came from the west, the direction of Mt. Taylor, which is known as Tse-pi'na, which Ts'eh is supposed to represent/be (*Ceremony* 197). This storm is the first time that any kind of precipitation that has fallen at or near Laguna in six years--her husband tells her that she had better fold her blanket before the snow breaks the branches on the trees. Her blanket is a black storm-pattern, and it is unfolded on her floor. Tayo watches her fold it as her husband suggested, then when he goes out to shake the snow from the trees, he notices that "By the time he had shaken a circle of snow in a pile around the tree, the storm had passed....overhead the snowflakes became sparse and floated down slowly on their own weight, now that the wind was gone" (*Ceremony* 209). It has also suggested that Ts'eh embodies Yellow Woman and Spider Woman. Ts'eh furthers Tayo's healing process by loving him, by teaching him sympathetic magic, and by advising him on the power of story.

This can be seen when Ts'eh makes love to Tayo: "He eased himself deeper within her and felt the warmth close around him like *river* sand, softly giving way under foot, then firmly closing about the ankle in *cloudy warm water*....He let the motion carry him, feeling the momentum within...when it came, it was the edge of a steep *riverbank* crumbling under the *downpour*..." (*Ceremony* 181). The heavy water imagery of the whole scene is a further reference to the feminine (rain nourishes the earth is known as "female rain," and rivers would fall into this gender characterization), and the healing power of water-- both of Tayo and of the land (water can be destructive, eg. flash floods, but that's called "male rain" ).

While he is making love to her he dreams about the cattle, and this is another crucial step in Tayo's healing. A large part of Laguna's economy, and thus their lifestyle,

is built on herding, so herding the cattle is a return to tradition in that sense. It is living off the land and with the animals and in unity with both, and that is a return to Laguna tradition for Tayo. To retrieve Josiah's cattle is to fulfill the promise that Tayo made to Josiah, and later broke when he signed the papers to join the Army with Rocky, which was the initial cause of much of Tayo's illness. Finally, to breed a new strain of cattle is an act of creation on both the literally physical level and also in a figurative sense as an intellectual exercise and a work of art. For Tayo to herd the cattle is to return to Laguna tradition and belief on a number of levels. The importance of this act is underlined in that the idea for the cattle breeding was started by Josiah *and* the Night Swan (an early manifestation of Tse-pi'na). It is also confirmed as part of Tayo's healing process when it begins to snow as he drives them down the mountain, and when he finds them in Ts'eh's corral. The mountain lion leads Tayo to the herd just when he is about to give up; this sets the final seal of approval by nature on Tayo's act of healing. His investment in this ceremony and his culture is clear when he dusts the tracks of the mountain lion with pollen.

Just as Tayo has nearly completed the ceremony, the story that has been going on for some time, he must attend to a final detail: the despatching of the witches and their ck'oy'o magic. This is the true test of the culture hero. He must witness the terrifying murder of Harley and Pinkie. Any murder would be horrible for a person of any culture to witness but it is particularly awful for Tayo, not only because the "witch" is his friend, Harley, but also because of the heavy ritualization of the killing, the cutting off of the whorls on the big toes and the cutting of his penis. This killing echoes the killings in the stories of Kaup'a'ta Gambler and the witches. It also echoes Masaw'i, the war god katsin'a, who was associated with the stars; Emo, the ex-soldier who loved the war, performs his killing when the pattern of the stars is right (Parsons 97-98). Further, the two evil twins, Kopot' and Kauk'a'kaya (possibly aligned with Emo and Pinkie?), who were associated with stars, threw arrows into the ground that created fissures in which the

people fell--Tayo hides between boulders when he is witnessing the witchery (Parsons 98). Tayo's investment in his cultural and ethnic identity is tested when he must prove his commitment to the preservation and creation of life: does he kill Emo, save Harley and become a witch in the process, or does he save himself and leave the witches, his former friends, to their fate? Tayo's choice is confirmed: "He had arrived at a convergence of patterns; he could see them clearly now....Accordingly, the story goes on with these stars of the old war shield; they go on, lasting until the fifth world ends, then maybe beyond. The only thing is: it has never been easy" (*Ceremony* 254). Having survived the night of witchery, Tayo resolves to go plant the seeds as he promised Ts'eh. Tayo has made a commitment to propagation, creation and life; he has returned to the people for good, and saved them in the process as well. This is confirmed in the clouds: "The transition was completed. In the west and in the south too, the clouds with round heavy bellies had gathered for the dawn. It was not necessary, but it was right, and even if the sky was cloudless the end was the same. The ear for the story and the eye for the pattern was theirs; the feeling was theirs; we came out of this land and we are hers" (*Ceremony* 255). The sign of the transition is particularly significant for a novel about Laguna, in which healing and rain are inextricably tied together. Tayo completes the circle with the people by reporting the signs to Ku'oosh and the other old men of Laguna.

Paula Gunn Allen proposes the Laguna view of the novel:

[*Ceremony* is] all about the feminization of a male. That's really what it's all about. And the ideal for a Laguna or Acoma male is that he learn how to be a woman. That's because at those pueblos God is a woman. And the important deity besides Thinking Woman is Iyatiko, Earth Woman, Corn Woman; and so in order for the land to be balanced and the people to be happy, all the people, men and women alike, must learn to nurture and think more about peace and harmony and prosperity, making things grow, taking care of things, then they never think about destruction and self-indulgence and personal emotions, none of which matters. What matters is that the people stay, and that we all live. That's what's important. And that the land be healthy so that she can bear. Once again, [Silko] pulls Tayo, the

protagonist, back into the tradition. And he's an outsider, but he's not an outsider physically because he always moves in the direction of Pueblo manhood, which is to walk in balance in a mothering sense, or, shall I say, the feminine sense.

(Coltelli 20-21)

Allen's statement can be extended to cover Welch's novel in that *Winter in the Blood* is all about the "'masculinization' of a male": the ideal for a Blackfeet and/or Gros Ventre male is to learn to be a warrior and perform the necessary acts of bravery and sacrifice to become a warrior. In a modern-day sense, the narrator has definitely begun that path--successfully--by the novel's end. In *Plains* culture, the masculine principle is more important. The chief culture hero/trickster for the Blackfeet is Na'pi, Old Man, and as opposed to Pueblo culture, Plains culture is patrifocal (which might explain the "stark" portrayal of women in Welch's novel as well).

Allen believes that in *Winter in the Blood*, Welch tries to convey how to "liv[e] in the modern world because you can't walk that traditional path here in modern America as easily as you could walk it in the traditional world of five hundred years ago or so....the traditions will transpose into another key and they won't lose their integrity. You can take the same tradition, put it in a new context...and...still fulfill your traditional obligations" (Coltelli, 21). This can truly be said of Silko's *Ceremony* as well.

In fulfilling their traditional obligations in the new context, both the narrator and Tayo have discovered a way to find the fulfillment that ethnic and particularly cultural identity brings. At the end of the novel, they have completed their ceremonies, and they know who they are (or in the case of the narrator, he has a better idea of who he's going to be). The ceremony and the storytelling have grounded them. Silko writes that, "...through stories from each other we can feel that we are not alone, we are not the first and the last to confront losses such as these. At Laguna whenever something happens (happy or sad or strange), that vast body of remembered stories is brought forth by people who have been listening to the account of this recent incident [that the story was told

about]....it all becomes a matter of community knowledge and concern" (*Delicacy* 68). It is possible that hearing the stories of his nation's loss of homeland, of his grandmother's loss of husband and her exile, of Yellow Calf's loss of his entire family in one winter, the narrator learns to accept the loss of First Raise and Mose with more grace. It seems clear that because Tayo has shared his ceremony with his community he has in some way replaced Rocky and Josiah's loss. At the close of *Ceremony*, Auntie is already recounting the "troubles that have been dropped into her lap" to the ladies at church (stories) and telling of the demise of Pinkie and the exile of Emo (even more stories). Old Grandma confirms the reader's belief that Tayo's story will become a large chunk of Laguna's story cycles: "It seems like I already heard these stories before...only thing is, the names sound different" (*Ceremony* 260). The community's continuation is well assured because the destroyers have been killed, the witchery has been ended, and the rains have returned, indicating approval of the deities and a balanced nature. If the people's continuity is assured, then so is Tayo's.

Simon Ortiz speaks movingly of his sense of membership in the Acoma community: "I guess all my perceptions and expressions do go back to what I was born into and what I was developed through, that is, the original experience....I can only be who I am as an Acoma person. I cannot be anything else. *Tzah dze guwaah ihskah mudahsqkumuh*, "I cannot be anything else" (Coltelli 106-107). This is probably the best way to explain what ultimately happens to the protagonists of these two novels: they discover their pasts, their cultural identities, and they learn how to fit into the worlds in which they were born; the narrator and Tayo, like Ortiz, cannot be anything else.



## Notes

General note: The terms Native American and Indian are used here interchangeably. Both are political designations invented for reasons of convenience by government administration. None of them had much application to the lives of Lagunas, Blackfeet, Pima, Hopi, Cherokees, etc. who were used to thinking of themselves as *the* people. Alan Velie argues persuasively that most "Indians" have just stuck with that term, and Native American is something he only hears off the reservation. For these reasons, both terms have been used interchangeably. Similarly, the terms "tribe"--more common in the everyday speech of mainstream Americans--and "nation" and "pueblo" (i.e., the Cherokee nation or Jemez Pueblo)--preferred by some academics and most Native Americans--are used interchangeably within the paper as well.

1. The papers given at the December 1977 MLA conference session on *Winter in the Blood* were reproduced in the 1978 *American Indian Quarterly* special issue devoted to the novel. The preface to the issue is the source of information on conference.
2. Onomastics and residency are considered primary indicators of gender bias in a society; these indicators do not operate for the Blackfeet.
3. Although it should be noted that cattle herding is one of the primary industries in that part of Montana today--but not too far from buffalo, and allowing the use of horses.
4. Welch may be playing about here with the name of a prominent Gros Ventre elder, The Boy; Alan Velie has treated the comic aspects of the novel thoroughly.
5. There is considerable debate about the ambiguous identity of this cow; some critics seem to believe the intimation in the text that it's the same cow that was instrumental in Mose's death; others argue that the cow would have to be twenty-two or twenty-three to be the same and this does not seem consistent with a cow's biology. LaVonne Ruoff writes, "The question whether the mother cow and the spinster cow are the same animal is ambiguous because both are described as having a wild eye and being roan and because the mother is described as being old. Nevertheless, the reproductive cycle of female cattle argues for their not being the same. Because the most desirable breeding period for cows is from approximately two to twelve years, a cow who had had a calf at eleven or twelve would be 'old'." Further, Welch's description of the spinster cow as 'dry that year' (p.106) indicates that she had already calved previous to Mose's accident twenty years before. For the mother and the spinster to be the same, the cow would have had to be at least twenty-three at the time the calf the narrator is trying to

[notes to pages 36-43]

wean is born. Although some animals reach twenty, most cattle are disposed of long before this age" (122).

6. Susan Scarberry observes: "Since memory is a repository for the cultural traditions for a given people, the act of recollection benefits not only individual beings but the collective as well. Memory insures the preservation of tribal heritage. By coming to terms with his memory, Tayo assumes responsibility for the quality of his life and for the old ways" (19).

7. Sing: the Navajo term, in English, for a "way" or a healing ceremony (i.e., a performance of the Nightway, Beautyway, Red Antway, etc.). Although these ceremonies contain hundreds of songs--they traditionally last anywhere from one to nine nights and possibly days as well--they are frequently informally referred to as a sing.

8. Laguna is unique among the pueblos in that it was the first to be visited by Americans (and to have intermarriage with Anglos). Its culture was "polluted" by the influx of a wide diversity of religious and cultural beliefs of other Native American groups, as a number of the original Keresan inhabitants who guarded the pueblo's shrines left with the admittance of whites, taking their shrines and religious secrets with them. Subsequently, Laguna took a great deal of cultural influence from Hopis and Zunis and others. According to Elsie Clews Parsons, "Hopi ceremonial organization is said to be primarily for rain, and Keresan, for curing, whereas at Zuni there are differentiated rain-making and curing groups" (88). Laguna remains primarily Keresan but the importance of the rain to Tayo and the elders at Laguna would indicate the Hopi influence at Laguna--even though rain is important to Keres groups as well.

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