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Reading "A Politics of Location": An Ethical Mapping of Leslie Marmon Silko's Ceremony

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**Reading 'A Politics of Location:'
An Ethical Mapping of Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony***

An Honors Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department English
Bates College

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Bachelor of Arts

by

Michela Moscufo

Lewiston, Maine
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Abstract

Analyzing the novel *Ceremony* by Leslie Marmon Silko according to the Laguna Pueblo tradition of place-naming reveals that place-names, geographical proper nouns, have both a representational and structural role in the novel. I outline an ethical mapping of the novel by applying the Native spiritual and epistemological world-views that construct “place” in the real world to *Ceremony*’s fictional world. Place-names function dialectically within the text: simultaneously narrating a fictionalized history, the narrative, and constructing a subtextual geography. The fictionalized history models a “possible place-world” in which Tayo, a Native American WWII veteran suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, is able to heal spiritually by recovering the tradition of place-naming. The subtextual geography, analyzed through Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of “chronotope,” Franco Moretti’s mode of “distant-reading” and David Harvey’s theory of “historical-geographical materialism,” is constructed through the performativity of place-names in order to subtextually construct a fragmented place-world that does not recover alongside Tayo. I argue that through the representational and structural abilities of place-names *Ceremony* models a possible state of healing for the Native American community, as a mutually reconstructive act, while simultaneously reinforcing the postcolonial reality that is oppositional to this healing.

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List of Place-Names

These are the entirety of place-names, the 292 geographical proper nouns, mentioned in the novel *Ceremony* as the reader encounters them. These will be continually referred to throughout the thesis as the names themselves.

ACOMA	MAGDALENA	GALLUP	CORTEZ	CERRITOS
GALLUP	MAGNALENA	KEAMS CANYON	EL FIDEL	GALLUP
BLACK MTS.	SOCORRO	LUKACHUKAI	NORMANDY	BIBO
LOS ANGELES	MAGDALENA	LAGUNA	OMAHA BEACH	THE Y
L.A. DEPOT	SEDILLO GRANT	GALLUP	KIMO THEATER	NEW LAGUNA
VETERANS' HOSP.	SEDILLO	SAN DIEGO	SAN DIEGO	MEXICO
BONE MESA	MEXICO	CEREMONIAL GNDS	OAKLAND	BLACK MOUNTAINS
MESITA	CANONCITO	GALLUP	GERMANY	RED LACK
CASA BLANCA	PAGUATE	HIGHWAY 66	PHILIPPINES	FLAGSTAFF
WAKE ISLAND	LALO'S	MEXICO	CENTRAL AVENUE	JEMEZ
MONTANO	CUBERO	GALLUP	KIMO	LAGUNA
LOS LUNAS	CUBERO	GALLUP	EL FIDEL	LAGUNA
DIXIE TAVERN	EL PASO	LOS ANGELES	TOWAC	BLACK MOUNTAINS
BUDVILLE	SOCORRO	LAGUNA	EL FIDEL	LOS ANGELES
SAN FIDEL	LOS CRUCES	ST. LOUIS	SAN DIEGO	PA'TO'CH
WHITING BROS STN.	SOCORRO	SEATTLE	ISLETA	LAGUNA
MCCARTYS	TSE-PI'NA	NEW YORK	CALIFORNIA	LAGUNA
ALBUQUERQUE	LALO'S	OAKLAND	CALIFORNIA	ACOMA FENCE
GALLUP	MAGDALENA	PHOENIX	SAN DIEGO	ENGINE ROCK
ALBUQUERQUE	SONORA	ALBUQUERQUE	OAKLAND	ACOMA VALLEY
NEW LAGUNA	FLOWER MT.	SANTA FE	L.A.	ENCHANTED MESA
LAGUNA	CUBERO	COCHITI	TOWAC	ACOMA
DIXIE TAVERN	WHITE RIVER	SANTA FE	HUDSON HOTEL	ACOMA ROAD
WAKE ISLAND	CALIFORNIA	SANTA FE	GALLUP	ACOMA FENCE
IWO JIMA	SANTA FE	CHICAGO	GALLUP	ENCHANTED MESA
LOS ANGELES	PAGUATE	SHERMAN INST.	EDDIE'S CLUB	ACOMA
OAKLAND	PAGUATE	GALLUP	TOWAC	ACOMA ROAD
AMERICA	KA'T'SINA	ST. LOUIS	TOWAC	GALLUP
AMERICA	TSE-PI'NA	PHILIPPINE JUNGLES	MOUNT TAYLOR	ACOMA ROAD
WAKE ISLAND	GRANTS	LAGUNA	HIGHWAY 66	GALLUP
IWO JIMA	CUBERO	CUBERO	GRANTS CAFÉ	MCCARTYS
GALLUP	MOUNT TAYLOR	CALIFORNIA	MESITA	HIGHWAY 66
ALBUQUERQUE	MCCARTYS	HIGHWAY 66	LAGUNA	CANONCITO
CUBERO	CUBERO	MOUNT TAYLOR	REEDLEAF TOWN	CEBOLLETA
AMERICA	CUBERO	GALLUP	ZUNI MOUNTAINS	ALBUQUERQUE
CLEVELAND, OHIO	CUBERO	CANONCITO	ZUNI MOUNTAINS	BIBO
OAKLAND	LALO'S	CHUSKA MTS	ZUNI MOUNTAINS	MOQUINO
SAN DIEGO	CASA BLANCA	DARK MOUNTAIN	LAGUNA	TRINITY SITE
FORT DEFIANCE	GALLUP	DARK MOUNTAIN	KA'T'SINA	WHITE SANDS
PARAJE	HIGHWAY 66	SOUTH PEAK	RIO PUERCO VALLEY	JEMEZ MOUNTAINS
REDLEEF TOWN	TRAILWAYS STATION	SAN MATEO	RIO PUERCO	LOS ALAMOS
ACOMA	GALLUP	CHUSKA MOUNTAINS	RIO GRANDE	JEMEZ MOUNTAIN CANYON
ALBUQUERQUE	GALLUP	EL PASO	NORTH TOP	ALBUQUERQUE
SAN DIEGO	HIGHWAY 66	SAN FIDEL	ENCINAL	GALLUP
ROCKY MOUNTAIN	GALLUP	BIBO	LAGUNA	GALLUP
GOLDEN, CO	GALLUP	CERRITOS	ACOMA	VETERANS' HOSP.
COLORADO	THE HOME	CUBERO	MOUNT TAYLOR	LOS ANGELES
LAGUNA	LITTLE AFRICA	GALLUP	FLOYD LEE'S LAND	WHITE HOUSE
4 TH AVE	GALLUP	LAGUNA	MARQUEZ	PAGUATE HILL
LONG BEACH	GALLUP	NEW LAGUNA	GRANTS	HIGHWAY 66
SAN DIEGO	SAN DIEGO	MESITA	ATLANTIC OCEAN	LAGUNA
L.A. DEPOT	SOUTH PACIFIC	LAGUNA	GRANTS	ST. JOSEPH MISSION
ALBUQUERQUE	SAN DIEGO	Y BAR	CANONCITO	PAGUATE HILL
AMERICA	GALLUP	GALLUP	GALLUP	WAKE ISLAND
AMERICA	GALLUP	GALLUP	PRARIE DOG HILL	IWO JIMA
AMERICA	GALLUP	TOWAC	HIGHWAY 66	ALBUQUERQUE
LAGUNA	GALLUP	GALLUP	DIXIE TAVERN	CALIFORNIA
ALBUQUERQUE	HIGHWAY 66	TOWAC	SAN FIDEL	CALIFORNIA
				LAGUNA

Introduction: Laying the Groundwork

Ceremony, by Leslie Marmon Silko, challenges the way we conventionally read novels. The manner in which “place” is represented in the text requires a theoretical model that understands Native-American spirituality and epistemology, in which word creates world.¹ “Place” in the novel exists because of a spiritual world-view in which landscape creates culture dialectically. In other words, Native American spirituality sees humans as shaping and being shaped by their environment. This thesis will analyze place as place-name—that is, not just as a physical location but a discursive act. This acknowledges both the Native American tradition of place-naming and the erasure and deformation of those names through the settler colonial appropriation of Native lands, as well as the fact that “place,” as a concept, is represented in novels *as text*. Understanding the role of “place” prompts a reconceptualization of the way in which we read the novel because it exposes the tension between the fictionalized history of its narrative and a subtextual geography. By subtextual geography I mean the implied spatial organization of the novel, most explicit in the presence of place-names.² This tension between history and geography registers the novel’s embodiment and narration of historical trauma. I argue that this tension creates an obligation that the critic, as reader, must engage with the text *ethically*, by reconceiving “place” as “place-name.”³

Ceremony tells the story of Tayo, a young, bi-racial Native American who returns home to the Laguna Pueblo tribal reservation after serving in the army during WWII. Captured as a

¹ See for example Rainwater’s argument in *Semiotics of Dwelling* that the novel’s fragmented narration constitutes an epistemological crisis according to the Native American epistemological framework.

² See for example Nelson’s reconstruction of the Laguna spiritual geography in the novel through Tayo’s physical movement from place to place, in *The Function of the Landscape*.

³ This notion of “ethical engagement” is best described by Freed in *The Ethics of Identification*.

prisoner of war, Tayo was forced to endure the notorious Bataan Death March. The military surrender of American forces, the largest in history, after the siege of Bataan incited a forced march by the Japanese military (Norman, *Britannica.com*). 76,000 men were taken as prisoners of war and only 54,000 reached Camp O'Donnell at the end of the march, although the exact numbers are uncertain (Ibid.). A significant portion of the troops that fought in WWII and experienced the Bataan Death March were Native Americans.⁴ During this forced march Tayo watched his cousin Rocky die, hit by a grenade, and then carried for miles in a stretcher until he was shot in the head by a Japanese soldier. Due to the severe trauma that Tayo has experienced he is unable to re-integrate with the social functioning of his tribe. He “cries all the time. Sometimes he vomits when he cries” (Silko, *Ceremony* 14). He has already been marked as an outsider because of his mother’s ostracization from the tribe, legible in his green eyes inherited from an unknown non-Native father. Silko depicts Tayo as suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, even though this diagnosis was not yet available for veterans, which is manifest not only in physical illness but in emotional and spiritual detachment. In a narrative framework in which the past frequently disrupts the present, *Ceremony* recounts the story of Tayo’s illness and recovery, which occurs through a spiritual ceremony dictated by a tribal medicine man. The narrative of healing is interspersed with fragmented accounts of events that occurred in Tayo’s youth and early adulthood before he enlisted, as well as during his service.

⁴ “Selective Service reported in 1942 that 99% of all Native Americans who were eligible for the draft (healthy males between the ages of 21 and 44) had registered for the draft. On the day Pearl Harbor was attacked, approximately 5,000 Indians were in the service. That number escalated to over 44,000 (both reservation and off reservation) by the time the war ended. This accounted for more than ten percent of the Indian population during the war time-frame” (Armed Forces History Museum website).

This fragmented narration, as a formal strategy whereby temporal disorder depicts trauma, corresponds to a fragmented subtextual representation of geography—which is to say, spatial disorder.⁵ The role of “place” within the novel is to simultaneously narrate a fictionalized history that models Tayo’s process of healing geographically as well as to materialize a subtextual geography that, at the level of the historical violence of settler colonialism, refers to a trauma that resists recovery. These dual trajectories can be reconciled with an understanding of the function of “place-names” in Native American culture. Understanding the dialectical relationship between history and geography represented in the place-name compels us to reconceptualize reading: the fictionalized narrative must be read geographically and the novel’s subtextual geography must be contextualized through the narrative’s message.⁶ The fictionalized narrative has been read geographically by Rick Mott and Robert Nelson yet the novel’s subtextual geography has not been analyzed according to the narrative’s model of geographic recovery.⁷

In her famous essay on “a politics of location” Adrienne Rich writes, “I want to understand how a place on the map is also a place in history” (30). Rich’s politics are feminist

⁵ Freed explains this “formal strategy” (219) in *The Ethics of Identification* yet fails to acknowledge the corresponding spatial disorder. Piper agrees that *Ceremony* “presents itself as [both] a spatial and chronological enigma” (485) in *Police Zones*. Rainwater reads the spatial disorder as “a crisis of dwelling [that] establishes the structural dynamic of Silko’s novel” (118) in *The Semiotics of Dwelling*.

⁶ I am using the term “dialectical” as it has been elaborated in the Marxist Critical tradition. As David Harvey explains: “dialectical thinking emphasizes the understanding of processes, flows, fluxes, and relations over the analysis of elements, things, structures, and organized systems” (49). In this thesis I will be expounding the dialectical qualities of history and geography present within the tradition of place-name and explained most succinctly by Harvey as “historical-geographical materialism.”

⁷ Piper makes the point in *Police Zones* that the novel’s incorporation of nuclear warfare, the “ultimate signifier of violence” forces us to reconsider claims to a novel’s “‘hopeful’ ending” (485). Although my argument about the novel’s subtextual geography is similar, our scopes and theoretical frameworks are significantly different.

politics and the location she seeks is one to speak from as a woman. Confronting histories of injustice must begin with a location. Not “a continent, a country, or a house” either but instead “the geography closest in- the body” (Ibid.). Her location must begin with “lived experience” and then confront the larger structures of political history and politicized geography. As Rich points out so clearly and beautifully in her essay, location is always political and therefore the process of understanding “place” within *Ceremony* is that of recognizing the embedded politics of history and geography. The struggle is to engage in theory, “the seeing of patterns,” without losing the “doings of living people” (31).

The politics of Native American history and geography are self-evident: all tribes within the United States have been irrevocably changed by the forces of colonization and continue to experience a systematic removal of their land and its stories. *Ceremony* encodes this information within a postcolonial geography and fragmented history.⁸ The trauma of Native American’s history, which is an ongoing lived experience, is registered in the tradition of place-naming. The ability to name places and to dictate their stories is an act of power and a product of sovereignty over one’s own landscape therefore, “place-names can offer evidence of changes in the landscape” (Basso 13): dispossession, forced removal, the re-naming and re-zoning of territories as well as the local trauma of events that occurred in specific places. Place-names “show what is different and what is the same” (16), information that can be decoded with an understanding of the social and navigational function of place-names. As Keith Basso explains, place-names are used by members of the tribe to reference stories as well as to navigate their place-world.⁹ Place-

⁸ See Rainwater’s essay *The Semiotics of Dwelling* for an analysis of the “crisis of dwelling” created by a postcolonial geography and Freed’s essay *The Ethics of Identification* for an analysis of the chronological fragmentation of the novel.

⁹ Keith Basso defines “place-world” as “a posited state of affairs, a particular universe of objects and events” (6).

naming reinforces a spiritual world-view that prioritizes “place” as a marker of the tribe’s history and a sacred geography. Places are named with stories of cultural importance to the tribe such that Native American geography is intertwined with its history. For example, the Western Apache tribe Basso researches believes that “the past lies embedded in features of the earth--- in canyons and lakes, mountains and arroyos, rocks and vacant fields---which together endow their lands with multiple forms of significance that reach into their lives and shape the ways they think” (34).

This culture of embeddedness within the landscape is virtually non-existent within the postcolonial world depicted in *Ceremony*, in which Tayo’s trauma is represented as geographic detachment from his native landscape. Tayo is unable to locate himself geographically, to name the places in his place-world or to recognize their stories. This detachment is not just meant to indicate how Tayo is traumatized by his wartime experiences; it is symptomatic of a larger cultural loss of place experienced most explicitly by the Native American veterans in the novel. Tayo’s geographic recovery is enacted through his physical movement across the Laguna landscape to re-learn the names of places and their stories.¹⁰ In the novel’s fragmented narration, Tayo also moves back in time to more expansive geographies that he experienced during WWII because, in addition to the Laguna reservation, he must also confront the names and stories of a postcolonial geography. Tayo is able to reconnect spiritually with his landscape not only by recovering the native tradition of place-naming, he must also be able to name sites such as “Iwo Jima” and “Trinity Site” and to confront their stories. This process of healing represents an updated healing ceremony that corresponds to a contemporary place-naming tradition, all

¹⁰ For scholarship on the concept of Tayo’s “geographic recovery” see Rainwater’s *The Semiotics of Dwelling*, Nelson’s *The Function of the Landscape*, Swan’s *Laguna Symbolic Geography* and Piper’s *Police Zones*.

presented through the novel's fictionalized history.¹¹ My argument is that the process of healing Silko outlines in the novel models a "possible place-world,"¹² an ideal spiritual recovery that is defined by the recovery of a Native place-world. Scholars have discussed how *Ceremony* models spiritual healing yet it has not been framed within the theory of possible-worlds.¹³

I believe a discussion of geography within the narrative is limited by focusing solely on the representational power of place-names because place-names additionally have a structural role. My focus in this thesis, then, is on reading the novel's geography in and of itself instead of considering it as a product of narrative. Place-names function as simultaneous markers of the novel's narrative—that is, the history it signifies—and its subtextual geography. Although many critics of the novel have addressed the narrative treatment of geography, the subtextual treatment of geography has been overlooked. I argue that it is a critical aspect of the novel. Using place-names and the tradition of place-naming as a tool for understanding the text, I not only trace Tayo's loss and recovery of place within the narrative, I further develop a framework for a structural analysis of the novel's geography. This structural analysis, which focuses on form over content, challenges traditional understandings of the novel's narrative. I will use structural analysis as a synonym for mapping, with the intention of exposing the novel's subtextual geographic patterns.

¹¹ Nelson, for example, outlines Tayo's ceremony geographically within the Laguna landscape in *The Function of the Landscape* yet doesn't discuss the role of place-naming and therefore fails to acknowledge how Tayo visits non-Laguna geographies interspersed during his process of healing through fragmented narration.

¹² Marie Laure-Ryan defines a "possible-world" as "a new system of actuality and possibility" (22), an alternative reality within the narrative created by what she calls the "ontological recentering" of novels.

¹³ Scholarship on *Ceremony* focuses solely on the concept of an alternative model for spiritual healing (see Nelson for a representative analysis) despite the fact that possible worlds are mentioned within anthropological (Basso 6) and historical (Harvey 56) scholarship on the dialectical quality of "place."

Basso's anthropological account of the relation between place and name is indebted to theorist Mikhail Bakhtin, whose concept of the "chronotope" analyzes place-names that appear in the fictional world of text. Chronotopes are symbols within the narrative, usually places, which expose how space and time are organized in the novel. Bakhtin analyzes the plot of novels against their geographical background in order to discern their unique ordering of space and time. Novels mark space through the naming of places and the movement between them, and mark time through the recounting of events with adverbs such as "suddenly," "earlier," "later." Each novel has its own unique ordering of space and time and a specific mechanism of marking this logic. Bakhtin's account of the relationship between space and time in narrative literary meaning suggests that we should consider the place-name, for *Ceremony*, as the text's defining chronotope.

Scholars, most notably Joanne Lipson Freed, have argued that the embodiment of trauma is a formal strategy of the text, meaning that is not just narrated as an experience but *enacted* through the novel's fragmented structuring. As Freed explains, Silko "not only *depict[s]* trauma but also *reproduce[s]* it" (221) in the novel. *Ceremony* enacts the place-naming tradition through a performative narrative strategy, constructing a fragmented place-world that draws our attention to the place-name as chronotope. *Ceremony* materializes a place-world through the literary naming of places. In this way, the text reflects Native epistemologies of place. The opening lines of the novel invoke Thought-Woman, creator of the Pueblo universe, who "named things and/ as she named them/ they appeared" (Silko, *Ceremony* 1), bringing Tayo's narrative into the textual "reality" through language. As Catherine Rainwater defines the culturally-specific epistemology: "'reality' is partly a product of semiosis" (117). Reading this epistemology geographically means

that as places are named within the narrative, they appear and thus construct a subtextual geography.

In order to analyze this subtextual geography, I turn to the model of “distant reading” presented by literary theorist Franco Moretti. Rejecting practices of close reading, Moretti advocates reading literary texts via “units” of textual meaning, such as place-names, decontextualizing them from a novel and literally mapping them in order to trace “emerging qualities” (Moretti, *Graphs* 54), other systems of meaning not available through close-reading. According to Moretti, mapping the geography of novels reveals an implicit spatial organization within the text, a product of the actual geographies and cultural land ethic that inform the author.

As I show in Chapter Four, reading *Ceremony* from the vantage of Moretti’s distance exposes a postcolonial and fragmented place-world that does not heal alongside Tayo’s recovery. However, I argue, as an approach to Native American literature this mode of reading is potentially unethical because the decontextualizing gestures Moretti advocates would have the reader/critic abandon the novel’s fictionalized history for an exclusive study of geography. Moretti’s mapping, in effect, disregards the dialectical quality of place-names. Thus, toward my conclusion, I will look to David Harvey’s “historical-geographical materialism” as a model of reading that can reconcile the dialectic of place-names and the space for “ethical engagement” their manipulation creates.

In bringing together models of mapping presented by Keith Basso, Mikhail Bakhtin, Franco Moretti and David Harvey I am elaborating a mode of critical reading that enables the place-names within a literary text to be materialized as places within a place-world.¹⁴ The place-

¹⁴ For an analysis of place-world as it relates to environmental philosophy see Edward Casey’s *Getting Back to Place* and *Between Geography and Philosophy*.

world is materialized by a Native American author using culturally-specific conventions surrounding storytelling and place-naming. In the next chapter I will examine the Native tradition of naming places and then look to how the tradition of place-naming is treated in *Ceremony*. I will show that reading *Ceremony* as a place-world exposes that “place” has both a representational and structural role. Understanding the dialectic of place-names ultimately enables a simultaneous negotiation of the textual embodiment of trauma with a recognition of the narrative’s “reconstructive” message. Although Tayo is able to return “home” (Silko, *Ceremony* 236) at the novel’s close, *Ceremony* encodes the “dispossession of ‘home’ [as] a primary feature of all Native American experience” (Rainwater 118). I will explain how Tayo’s spiritual “home” is subjected to the politics of location.

Chapter One: An Anthropological Mapping of Place-Names

The treatment of place-names within *Ceremony*'s fictional world subverts how place-names function within the Native American real world, emphasizing how Tayo is estranged from the cultural tradition of place-naming. Throughout the novel, Tayo's inability to name places and their stories is a sign of his trauma and, as well, a sign of the broader cultural loss of Native spiritual practices. In the traditional Native American spiritual world-view, manifest in the tradition of storytelling, the tribe's fictionalized history is always located geographically, anchored by place-names. This creates a "sacred geography" (Deloria 122) in which all locations within the tribe's landscape are filled with stories that collectively produce a tribal people's conception of themselves, enabling cultural survival and coexistence with the environment. Understanding that participation in the cultural tradition of place-naming is a marker of unity with one's landscape enables an alternative reading of Tayo's trauma and recovery. The tradition of place-naming elucidates not only Tayo's traumatic condition, but a larger postcolonial detachment from the Laguna Pueblo landscape as a spiritual and political condition. Applying the traditional function of place-names within the real world to their appearance within *Ceremony*'s fictionalized world exposes the specific mechanisms through which the tradition is subverted and then recovered in Tayo's spiritual healing.

The most significant and relevant scholarship on Native American place-naming has been published by the non-Native anthropologist Keith Basso.¹⁵ In his own scholarship, Basso describes the previous absence of scholarship on place-naming:

¹⁵ For a survey of the field see Thorton's *Anthropological Studies of Native American Place-Naming*. Thorton's anthropological study of place-naming within the Tlingit, *Being and Place among the Tlingit*, is the closest work to Basso's in scope and, in fact, continually references the scholarship Basso has done.

[W]ith the notable exception of Frederica de Laguna's (1972) long-delayed monograph on the Tlingit, I know of not a single study written by a linguist or anthropologist in the past twenty-five years that deals extensively or in depth with the place-name system of a North-American tribe (44).

In order to conduct comprehensive research on the tradition and to effectively open up the field to non-Native understanding, Basso spent five years with the Western Apache tribe of Arizona studying their linguistic codes, social norms and cultural history as they relate to the naming of place. Basso's study explains place-naming's dialectical quality as simultaneously constructing history and geography, as well as its social and navigational function within the tribe.

Thomas Thorton situates Basso within a tradition of anthropological interest in place-naming beginning with Franz Boas, the father of American cultural anthropology, and sees a continuation of Basso's legacy within several more recent collaborative projects (such as in the Tlingit Glacier Bay), yet he characterizes place-names as "fragile linguistic artifacts" (*Anthropological Studies* 225) which deserve renewed anthropological and critical attention. Since "most Native American languages are either dead or dying" (Ibid.) it is necessary for writers and scholars to learn the tribally-specific place-names and their stories, as well as to understand the tradition of place-naming generally. Place-names and the stories behind them carry cultural knowledge and histories seemingly lost with the disappearance of Native languages.

Ceremony's representation of "place" and what I read as a dependence upon the tradition of place-naming has not been analyzed in the terms I am describing. Given the importance of this tradition within Native American spiritual practice—the ostensible focus and theme of this novel—I believe Silko is highly conscious of place's ability to indicate trauma and recovery. In

this chapter I will analyze the treatment of place-naming within the narrative by tracing the organization and manipulation of place-names in order to prove that Tayo's trauma and recovery are represented *through* the tradition of place-naming. The subsequent three chapters will analyze the role of place-names *subtextually* to prove that the novel enacts the tradition of place-naming as a formal strategy, materializing a fragmented place-world and thus the limits of the "recovery" depicted in the novel.

Place-names within the narrative enable a dual analysis: they are used to tell the stories of a tribe's history as well as to map a geography. Place-names thus simultaneously narrate a fictionalized history and construct a geography within the real world of Native American traditions and, as I will show, within the novel *Ceremony*. The role of place-names within the text cannot be understood apart from their role in the real world. By analyzing Native American fiction with an attention to the tradition of place-naming, I am aware of the role of "decolonizing" scholarship which situates *Ceremony* and Native American literature at large within its culture.¹⁶ This contextualization is what I aim to do now.

Native Americans have an intrinsic and intuitive relationship with the natural world and the practice of place-naming maintains this connection. Although the tradition varies among Native tribes in America, depending on how a particular culture has been shaped by forces of colonization, the premise remains the same: geographic places are named with a cultural narrative associated with that place. The tribe's history is repeated and shaped by stories that are

¹⁶ Decolonizing scholarship is an "approach that engages with, helps us to understand and then act upon history" (Smith 61). For examples of culturally-contextualized scholarship on *Ceremony* see Jahner's *An Act of Attention*, Lincoln's *Blue Medicine*, and Owens's *The Very Essence of Our Lives* for use of Native mythology; Rainwater's *The Semiotics of Dwelling* and Ruppert's *No Boundaries, Only Transitions* for use of Native epistemology; Nelson's *The Function of the Landscape* and Mott's *Digitizing Leslie Silko's Laguna Landscape* for use of Native geography.

told *through* geographic places within the tribe's landscape. The Dakota Sioux scholar Vine Deloria, Jr. speaks of the "sacred geography" (122) of tribal culture that creates a "spatial conception of reality" (76) and history. Although Basso doesn't specifically name the "dialectical" quality of place-names, his analysis confirms it by studying the mechanisms through which history and geography are joined in place. As Basso explains it, "what matters most is *where* the events occurred, not when" (31).

Place-names manifest a complete equivalence between a physical site and its narrative meaning, between geography and history. The site *is* the story and together they form a discrete symbol that signifies both space and time. The place-name simultaneously *locates* a site within geographic space and an event within historical time. In addition, it completely describes this situation: the site can be distinguished visually and a moment time in mytho-historical time has a location on this map. Members of the tribe identify physical places with cultural narratives that occurred in those locations, such that they become synonymous. By imbuing geographic sites with narrative, place-names wed the physical reality of the landscape with human experience within that landscape. The place is identified by a mytho-historical event that occurred in that location, a story that gives the place its name. In the act of naming two simultaneous events occur: the narrative is spatially anchored in place and the place becomes geographically identified by the narrative. Place-names embed physical geography with their stories, encoding the tribe's cultural history as a sacred geography.

The tribe's place-world, continually referenced and moved through, traces the history of the tribe's interaction with its landscape and reinforces this spiritual co-existence. Place-names are necessary to the tribe's conception of itself because they mark a history that is remembered and, in effect, kept alive through speech via oral storytelling traditions. Two symbolic resources,

language and land, are manipulated in tandem in order to construct personal and social identities. As Basso writes, “knowledge of places is therefore closely tied to knowledge of the self, to grasping one’s position in the larger scheme of things, including one’s own community, and to securing a confident sense of who one is as a person” (34).

In shaping the history and geography of a tribe, place-names have a unique social and navigational function. Not only do place-names actively shape each tribal member’s identity and relationship with their environment, they function socially in order to recount stories of importance through place. They are used by medicine men, tribal elders and in everyday conversation to package the “wisdom [that] sits in places” (Basso 134). Basso divides Western Apache narrative into myths, historical tales, sagas, and gossip, all of which have their own distinct mode of naming place dependent upon the semantic dimensions of “time and purpose” (49). Stories moralize, criticize, entertain or instruct depending on the subtext of the narrative. They often carry moral weight and are used as social tools in conversation to shape the behavior of members of the tribe. The name “Line of White Rocks Extends Up and Out” (94) for example, represents a specific site at which the story occurred: the story of a young girl who, being too lazy to carry firewood all the way back home, took a short cut and consequently was bitten by a snake and then reprimanded by her grandmother. When the name of this place is recalled in conversation, a tribal member would realize they are being chastised for similar behavior. Place-naming is not only a “cultural activity,” used to convey information and to dictate social functioning but an “imaginative activity,” constructing and shaping place-worlds (7).

Basso delineates an anthropological model through which place-naming, as an act of “place-making,” constructs a “place-world” (6). This world is defined as a “particular universe of objects and events” (Ibid.), more clearly stated as sites of geography and history. The tribe’s

place-world consists of a geography of places and their associated stories, a set of mytho-historical narratives superimposed onto a map of geographic sites. Given their dialectical quality, place-names, via the practice of place-naming, actively shape the tribe's geography and history and hence, tribal identity. These places are "brought into being" (Ibid.) through the act of naming and should therefore be considered performative as they not only communicate but *construct* identities and worlds.¹⁷ Within *Ceremony* the "performativity" of place-names not only materializes the novel's subtextual geography, as I discuss in the subsequent chapter, but also models a possible state of history. What Western Apache tribal history does, according to Basso, is to "fashion possible worlds, give them expressive shape, and present them for contemplation as images of the past that can deepen and enlarge awareness of the present" (32). By dictating the stories associated with place, the tradition of place-naming can refigure the history and geography of a tribe.

As Basso notes, "every developed place-world manifests itself as a possible state of affairs" (6), introducing the notion of possibility as embedded within place. "Building and sharing place-worlds," Basso writes, through naming is "not only a means of reviving former times but also of *revising* them" (Ibid.). Therefore, place-naming narrates a fictionalized history in the same way that novels do. A fictional text such as *Ceremony* that explicitly narrates a fictionalized history can be read in relation to the naming of places as also engaging, through literary form, in the construction of a possible place-world.

Silko's nonfiction writing conveys a deep understanding of Native American spirituality and epistemology that encourages this anthropological reading of *Ceremony*.¹⁸ Silko explains

¹⁷ Using Judith Butler's definition of performativity: "within speech act theory, a performative act is that discursive practice that enacts or produces what it names" (13).

¹⁸ See Silko's collection of nonfictional essays, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit*.

how the “landscape sits at the center of Pueblo belief and identity” and in fact constructs this identity because “the people and the land are inseparable” (*Yellow* 45, 85). The Pueblo tribe, she writes, believes that “the human consciousness remains *within* the hills, canyons, cliffs, and the plants, clouds, and sky [and therefore] viewers are as much a part of the landscape as the boulders they stand on” (27). As Silko explains it, in the Pueblo worldview there is no separation between man and his environment; they are part of one whole. The tradition of storytelling manifests this belief in the intrinsic interconnectedness of the natural world and the human world. “Location, or place,” she writes “nearly always plays a central role in the Pueblo oral narratives” (33); thus, “stories cannot be separated from their geographical locations, from actual physical places on the land” (58). Stories are embedded within geographic sites and create a landscape that is alive with narrative. Silko suggests that Pueblo stories’ embeddedness in places makes it almost impossible for future generations to lose these stories: “there is a story connected with every place, every object in the landscape” (*Ibid.*). What Silko describes as “the continuity and accuracy of the oral narrative” (35) are reinforced by landscape itself which, in turn, enables the Pueblo people to maintain their interpretation of that landscape. There is a complete equivalence between the oral narrative and the physical location it describes and therefore, in the case of many of the narratives Silko discusses, determining which came first— “the incident or the geographical feature that begs to be brought alive in a story that features some unusual aspect of this location”—is impossible (33).

These intertwined traditions of storytelling and naming places represent a way of being-in-the-world and a way of *seeing* this world.

The oral narrative, or story, became the strategy through which the complex of Pueblo knowledge and belief was maintained. Whatever the event or the subject, the ancient

people perceived the world and themselves within that world as part of an ancient, continuous story composed of innumerable bundles of other stories (Silko, *Yellow* 31).

Storytelling is thus a tradition of identity-construction, cultural survival, and maintaining harmony with the environment. Within the world-view this specific Native author ascribes to the Laguna Pueblo tribe, the qualities of place-names Basso discusses are manifestly present: the primacy of the landscape and human interaction within it, stories' intimate interconnection with site, and the landscape's inscription with stories meant to ensure the tribe's cultural survival. The place-world that Silko constructs in *Ceremony* is reliant upon the cultural conventions of place-naming despite the fact that the tradition itself is only briefly referred to in the novel. Silko uses place-names to construct the fictionalized history of Tayo's possible place-world, which is narrated in the second person.¹⁹

The novel's plot in this way develops as a ceremony in which the protagonist must spiritually reconnect with the Laguna landscape in order to recover from his "sickness," post-traumatic-stress disorder from service in WWII. Scholars generally regard Tayo's journey in *Ceremony* as one of reconnecting with his native landscape. However, as I mentioned previously, few scholars have attempted to trace this recovery geographically and none have viewed the novel's plot specifically through the lens of the Native tradition of place-naming. Tayo's trauma is specifically manifested through the inability to name places and to understand the significance

¹⁹ As an aside—the text-at-large is framed as a place-world through the text's opening invocation of the Pueblo Thought-Woman, creator of the Pueblo universe. Silko is the actual narrator, Thought-Woman is the imaginary narrator that constructs the novels' materialized place-world (through Native American epistemological conventions) and given the second person perspective, the narrative is associated with the subjectivity of its protagonist, Tayo. This distinction is important because in mapping the place-world of the text-at-large we refer to the authorial intention of Silko yet in analyzing the treatment of place-naming within the novel we are referring to Tayo's place-world.

of their stories. Within Tayo's fragmented place-world his stories, which constitute the fictionalized history of the narrative, are unbound in place. His "sickness" translates to an inability to navigate his place-world, or even to locate himself within it. His spiritual healing must coincide with a recovery of the social and navigational function of place-names.

Following his discharge, Tayo returns to the Laguna Pueblo reservation, where he had grown up with his mother's family. His mother, a homeless prostitute, was disowned by her family and by the tribe. Unable to care for Tayo, she abandoned him to live with her mother and siblings. Tayo grew up feeling the shame and disgrace of being the child born of an unknown white father and thus regarded in his tribe as a "half-breed" (Silko, *Ceremony* 27). Tayo and his cousin Rocky decided to enlist in the U.S. Army during WWII. Rocky was very eager to leave the reservation and to enter the "white world" (13), an "assimilationist" in contrast to what Suzanne Evertsen Lundquist regards as Tayo's "traditional" (72) world-view, and he convinced Tayo to register with him. They served together in the Philippines, where they were imprisoned by the Japanese Army and subjected to the brutal mistreatment that has since become known as the Bataan Death March, a notorious WWII war crime. Rocky dies during this forced march, killed by a Japanese soldier, and Tayo suffers such intense trauma that following his liberation, he is released from service to be hospitalized in Los Angeles. Yet Tayo's war trauma even predates his experience as a prisoner of war. From the beginning of his service, he was traumatized by the violence against both the enemy troops and fellow soldiers. In one particularly poignant instance, when Tayo is forced to kill Japanese prisoners, he hallucinates that among them is his beloved Uncle Josiah and subsequently suffers a panic attack. Perhaps a sign of the traditional worldview ascribed to him by Lundquist, Tayo is shown to be a failure as a

soldier, unable to de-humanize the enemy and commit cold-blooded murder in the terms required by modern Western mechanized warfare.

Upon his return from the war Tayo suffers severe PTSD and continues to experience flashbacks that return him to the sites of war. Notably, Silko depicts the psychic dislocations of PTSD as geographic confusion. Tayo's grandmother determines that he must see a Laguna medicine man, because the "white doctors" (Silko, *Ceremony* 117) have done nothing to help him and, back home, his condition is only worsening. The second medicine man he visits, Betonie, is able to understand his trauma and connects it to a larger pattern of human evil. Tayo experienced the "witchcraft" (122) during the war but Betonie insists that it is much greater than that, even greater than the division between white and other. Betonie dictates a healing ceremony for Tayo that is based upon the traditional Laguna Scalp Ceremony, conducted on those who have killed during war. Tayo must recover three elements in order to be healed from his trauma: the Mexican cattle he lost, the woman (Thought-Woman) who is incarnate in multiple avatars throughout the novel, and the mountain Tse-pi'na, or Mount Taylor.

At the same time Tayo must fight against forces of evil that are incarnate in his fellow veterans, named in the ceremony "Destroyers" (Silko, *Ceremony* 162). A pattern of drinking and violence has developed among Native American veterans as a response not only to the trauma of war, but to the deep anger and resentment towards a country that accepted their service but which continued to marginalize and discriminate against them. Following their military release, many with disability checks from shrapnel wounds or shell shock, these young Native Americans veterans were, Silko suggests, confronted with the harsh reality behind their wartime patriotism. Becoming soldiers enabled them to feel American, that they belonged to the country too, yet when they returned they began to realize that "it was the white people who gave them that

feeling and it was the white people who took it away again when the war was over” (39), just like they had stolen the Native lands.

Tayo’s experience of trauma and his disconnect from his tribe represent the actual lived trauma of Native American veterans who fought in WWII as well as the much larger struggle for tribal members to recover and preserve their cultural heritage against the forces of colonization that have stripped away their land and its stories. As Allan Chavkin writes, “if one is to understand properly Tayo’s problem,” stated perhaps more sensitively as trauma, “one must see it in historical context; that is, one must see it against the background of the tragic story of Native Americans after the arrival of the Europeans” (5). Drinking eases the pain and anger that Tayo, Emo, Harley, Leroy and Pinkie feel, and also reroutes it into self-destructive violence—including violence toward each other. The novel culminates in the murder of Harley, Tayo’s closest friend, at the hands of Emo and Leroy, who had been trying to force Harley to capture Tayo so the others might turn him into the BIA (Bureau of Indian Affairs) police for a reward. The novel ends with news of the deaths of Harley, Leroy and Pinkie and with Emo’s exile to California. Tayo is able to survive and to ultimately heal, Silko suggests, because he does not give in to the violence, he does not complete his friends’ “deadly ritual” which would render him “another victim, a drunk Indian war veteran settling an old feud” (*Ceremony* 235). This plot is most often read through the lens of his healing ceremony, as the intertwined processes of trauma and recovery.

Reading this novel requires a great amount of cultural contextualization and historical knowledge, as well as ethical and “decolonizing,” engagement.²⁰ The challenge of reading

²⁰ See Gunn Allen’s *Special Problems* for an explanation of the complexity of engaging with the text.

Ceremony is to understand its role as a postcolonial novel within what had been termed the “Native American Renaissance.”²¹ Beginning with the publication of N. Scott Momaday’s Pulitzer Prize-winning *House Made of Dawn* in 1968, scholars have characterized an extremely productive period of Native American literary production.²² The “Renaissance,” termed by Kenneth Lincoln in 1983, encompassed larger economic and cultural rebirth despite referring principally to the increase in literary production and publication. Alan R. Velie and A. Robert Lee note that although “changes in economics, politics, and public presence, as well as literature and other arts...have contributed to the increased prosperity and sense of achievement among Indians, [this Renaissance must not] underplay setbacks, poverty-line subsistence on certain reservations, city drift, alcohol and its fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) consequences, school dropout rates, and domestic violence” (3). Silko is a principal actor within this period, opening up aspects of Native American spirituality and storytelling to the larger inter-cultural imagination, but not without these complexities of postwar and postcolonial experience on the reservation. Silko rejects simplistic narration and interpretation by offering to the reader, among other complex situations, the paradox of Native Americans serving in WWII, the history of atomic warfare beginning within the local Pueblo landscape, the social stigma of being “mixed-breed,” and the loss of Laguna storytelling traditions and along with those traditions, stories’ traditional capacity as agents of healing.

What I am arguing is that reading the novel as a place-world enables the complexities of the novel’s history and geography to coexist for the reader, helping us recognize how Silko

²¹ See Lincoln’s *Native American Renaissance* and Velie and Lee’s *The Native American Renaissance* for more on this subject.

²² Although Native Americans have been publishing works in English since the 18th century, there were only nine novels published before *House Made of Dawn* and now there are hundreds (Velie 3).

prioritizes lived experience within a “place” that is fraught with pain and trauma. Examining the function of place-names within the novel enables me to better understand the formal and thematic importance of geography within the novel. Many scholars have discussed *Ceremony*’s geography, and some of their points will be elaborated here to reinforce my claims yet using place-names as an approach to theory is novel and highly productive. Significant scholarship has traced Tayo’s trauma and recovery geographically. I aim to expand these arguments by shifting their definition of geography to include the novel’s entire place-world.

Karen Piper contends that *Ceremony* “necessitates the reader’s orientation from a text-based reading to a spatially organized reading” and should not only be “read, but also “traced”—as “on a map, *placed* in the sense of being physically located” (487). Nevertheless, to my knowledge, only two scholars, Rick Mott and Robert Nelson, have actually attempted to map the novel.²³ Mott and Nelson begin their individual essays with the same quote from Silko, the most explicit invitation to read the text geographically. Silko, in a letter to poet James Wright, remarks that “you pointed out a very important dimension of the land and the Pueblo people’s relation to the land when you said it was as if the land was telling the stories in the novel. That is it exactly...the writing was my way of re-making that place, the Laguna country, for myself” (Silko in Nelson, *Function* 139). Both Mott and Nelson use this clear statement of authorial intention to analyze exactly *how* the land is telling stories in the novel. They have written the most significant geographic scholarship on *Ceremony* by mapping the novel within the Laguna landscape yet both fails to address the critical role of place-names in constructing these geographies. In my reading, as Silko constructs a fictional place-world through the naming of

²³ Although not specifically a mapping project, Karen Piper analyzes the novel “spatially” according to the political territories constructed within *Ceremony*’s “hybrid” environment in her essay *Police Zones*.

places, place-naming is the principal mechanism through which the novel attempts to remake the land with stories. The type of mapping Mott and Nelson present requires significant knowledge of Laguna spirituality and relationship to the environment and so I would like to briefly explore their findings before I consider and expand on their efforts through a reading of the text via the tradition of place-naming.

Rick Mott uses digital hypertext to contextualize the geography of Laguna Pueblo, attempting through web design to mimic the interactivity of the Native American landscape. Mott sees interactivity of hypertext as “reflecting native notions of landscape” because it “allows users to interact with the landscape more intimately, more reverentially, and more holistically” (Mott). He has created an online platform, “WebCeremony,” with maps and images to “orient” readers of *Ceremony*, giving them an understanding of the non-fictional terrain the novel continually references. Multimedia hypertext allows users to explore maps, photography, video and audio clips, and panoramas of the Laguna landscape that define the novel’s geography as not two-dimensional but multi-dimensional and dynamic. Mott’s platform is a model through which the text’s geography can be “accurately” mapped and represented, by enabling readers to visualize the landscape that Tayo must reconnect with, yet he does not discuss the narrative of Tayo’s recovery at all.

Robert Nelson literally maps Tayo’s trajectory towards completing the Ceremony within the Laguna landscape, attempting to show that Tayo’s ceremony is dependent upon “revisit[ing] the land itself in order to reestablish contact with the power of healing that he may find there” (*Function* 142). Nelson begins by mapping the physical lay of the land, arguing that “it is enough to know only how the land itself is configured in order to gain access into the world of the novel” (141). Through intensely close reading and geographical mapping, Nelson traces Tayo’s physical

movement in the novel in order to argue that the spiritual healing can only be completed once Tayo has visited certain places and completed the map of his ceremony that Betonie has outlined. Tayo, in his reading, must find “the regenerative spirit” (143) of Ts’its’tsi’nako, Thought-Woman, incarnate in the Night Swan, a woman he encounters on Mount Taylor and then Ts’eh. The map’s “subjective-looking pattern” is Tayo’s “interior landscape,” according to Nelson, which must match the arrangement of geographic landmarks, the “external landscape” (141). In order for Tayo to heal, he must spiritually reconnect with his landscape through the geographical movement between the landmarks Cubero, Mount Taylor, the Pa’to’ch Butte, Jackpile Mine and Laguna.

Tayo’s spiritual ceremony begins at Lalo’s place in Cubero, where Josiah and then Tayo encounter the Night Swan, the first avatar of Thought-Woman. Betonie tells Tayo that he must seek the speckled cattle that Josiah bought at the Night Swan’s suggestion, yet which were lost during Tayo’s service. Nelson charts Tayo movement south to the Pa’to’ch Butte, where he saw the cattle in his dream, but explains that Tayo “ends up” moving north to Mount Taylor by “interpolat[ing] a memory of Tayo’s” in which he was tugged in that direction by “feeling” (*Function* 146). This change in movement reorients Tayo to fit into the “pattern of the broader regenerative ceremony” (*Ibid.*). On Mount Taylor Tayo finds a nameless avatar of Thought-Woman and discovers the speckled cattle, stolen by a white rancher named Floyd Lee. The next step is for Tayo to find Ts’eh, the final manifestation of the regenerative spirit, who he realizes in a dream is located at the Pa’to’ch Butte. Once he finds her and falls in love his spiritual reconnection with the landscape is complete. Now he must face the “witchery” that is incarnate in the “Destroyers” (162), Emo and his fellow conspirators. Tayo realizes that this final event will occur at Jackpile Mine, where uranium was mined for the atomic bomb that was tested

nearby, at Trinity Site. As Nelson explains, “it makes sense that in this renovated ceremony the spirit of the Destroyers should be invested in the fact of the atomic bomb” (163). This is the test of the regenerative spirit now within Tayo: to either persevere or be annihilated. In this place of convergence the final pattern of the ceremony becomes clear and Tayo realizes that he must not give in to the witchcraft, which lures him to kill Emo and complete their “deadly ritual” (Silko, *Ceremony* 235). The novel ends with Tayo’s return to Laguna, the geographic center of the tribe, reinforcing his spiritual recovery and reintegration with the social functioning of the tribe. Although Nelson brilliantly charts the movement of Tayo’s spiritual ceremony within the geographical limits of the Laguna landscape I argue that Tayo’s trauma and recovery must be mapped within a much more expansive geography, apparent when the function of place-naming within the text is exposed.

Tayo’s geographic return to his native landscape after service in WWII begins the novel’s narrative. The beginning of the text, structurally, is the invocation of Thought-Woman within embedded text, which frames the subtextual geography I will explore in the next chapter. Tayo’s trauma, his emotional, social and spiritual detachment, is defined geographically as placelessness. Tayo cannot navigate his place-world or locate himself within it and therefore he is unbound in place, a victim to the fragmented narrative which continually relocates him in space and time.²⁴ Both Tayo and his environment are nameless as a product of trauma, signifying a failure of the place-naming tradition which restores unity to people and their landscape. Tayo cannot name places in his place-world, or their stories. Read in this way, Tayo’s trauma prevents him from participating in the spiritual tradition of place-naming and his healing must coincide

²⁴ The novel is framed as “bundles of stories” (Silko, *Yellow* 31) that coincides with multiple geographies.

with a recovery of the place-naming tradition. The “pattern” of the healing ceremony that Nelson delineates can be read as a cognitive map of his spiritual geography that Tayo must learn from Betonie, the Navajo medicine man, which restores to Tayo the ability to navigate and name his surroundings.

Tayo’s trauma is defined through place-naming within three fragmented geographies, which manifests the corruption of the Native American tradition that must occur within a spiritually-whole place-world. Mott and Nelson focus exclusively on what I will term the geography of home, the landscape he must recover. However, Tayo’s ceremony cannot be understood without the geography of war and the geography of alcoholism and drinking that are implicitly invoked through place-names and which respectively cause and manifest his trauma.

Tayo’s return to his native landscape at the beginning of the narrative makes explicit his inner state of detachment. Tayo’s trauma is depicted through place-naming and therefore it is no coincidence that the first place mentioned in the novel is “nameless” (Silko, *Ceremony* 6): his “sickness” is constructed geographically out of place. He literally has no location: his wartime service occurred on a “nameless Island” (Ibid.) and his stay in the hospital in Los Angeles was similarly nameless. “It had been a long time since he had thought about having a name” (15). Tayo is unable to name the Pacific Island that haunts him because it is the site at which he first became dislocated in space and time. His place-worlds merged as the body of a Japanese enemy transfigured into the body of his uncle Josiah. Despite the distance between the Philippine jungles and Laguna of “thousands of miles” (6), Tayo’s trauma and homesickness fragment these two geographies. Given the daily experience of violence and pain, Tayo rejects the geography of war into which he has been placed and desires to be back home in Laguna. Rocky acknowledges

that Tayo is “homesick” and feels geographic detachment but he insists that “this is what we’re supposed to do” (7).

Beginning with Tayo’s hallucination of Josiah, it becomes apparent to the reader that the order of Tayo’s mental map has been eroded due to repeated trauma. Tayo “cried at how the world had come undone, how thousands of miles, high ocean waves, and green jungles could not hold people in their place” (Silko, *Ceremony* 17). It is the desire for people and events to be *place-bound* that becomes Tayo’s quest, the purpose of the ceremony. Tayo can only spatially anchor the places and stories within his place-world if he recovers the spirituality that would enable him to participate in place-naming.

Tayo’s placelessness is constructed through three competing geographies (uncovered through patterns of place-naming which will be discussed in detail): the geography of WWII celebrated as sites of “victory” that haunt Tayo, the geography of drinking enacted by “going up the line” of Highway 66, and the geography of the home landscape, the spiritual geography which Tayo must recover in his ceremony. These geographies are intertwined in the text, overlapping and blending into one another. Tayo’s sickness is framed in the beginning of the novel within a place-world that includes sites, place-names of bars and WWII, that are named because they hold social value yet which essentially corrode the order of the map because they are spiritually toxic. As enacted through the place-naming tradition, Tayo navigates the geographies of war and drinking, bringing them back to life in fragmented narration because they have a social function among the community of veterans he associates with. Yet Tayo’s experiences in the Philippines, in Los Angeles, in Oakland, and in the Dixie Tavern only make explicit and reinforce the instability of his place-world. Each of these three geographies

competes for primacy in Tayo's fragmented place-world and he cannot reconcile the three geographies within one place-world.

Through a spatially-defined ceremony Tayo must embrace the geography of his home landscape and reject the geography of war and the geography of drinking. Place-names are organized in the geography of war that caused Tayo's trauma and continually remembers it, the geography of drinking that manifests trauma through a culture of navigating bars, and the geography of home, the lost spiritual geography. In his healing ceremony, Tayo must not only recover the places and stories of his native landscape, but the places and stories that caused his sickness. Therefore his ceremony must be enacted within a much more expansive geography than traditional Native homelands. Understanding Tayo's ceremony within his entire place-world, extending past the Laguna landscape, in effect reconceptualizes his spiritual journey of healing. As will be explained in the subsequent chapter, this reading is warranted because the novel's fragmented narration physically moves Tayo through space and time in order to recover places and stories of his past and therefore sutures an expansive geography within his local spiritual healing. Tayo must confront traumatic experiences from his youth and service in the war and the narrative moves through time and space to accommodate this journey.

The geography of war in *Ceremony* spans the sites Iwo Jima, Wake Island and the Philippines in the Pacific Theater and Los Angeles, Oakland, San Diego and Cleveland in the United States. This matrix of sites was experienced in the historical past of WWII yet are continually invoked by Tayo's Indian veteran friends because they have personal and symbolic significance. These sites are kept alive through the stories told about them, stories that are continually repeated and embellished. These sites signify victory—either because of the enemy's eventual defeat, in the case of Pacific Islands, or because they are places where the soldiers were

given respect, accolades and attention. In the American cities to which they returned after the war they were able to feel proud and patriotic because in those moments “they belonged to America” (Silko, *Ceremony* 39). The naming of “America” in the context of the geography of war expresses an idealized patriotism, repeating a name of intense symbolic value in order to recover a set of stories. The geography of war is located outside of the reservation or the historic geographical limits of the tribe’s landscape, yet the Native soldiers were able to feel belonging and therefore identify with this place-world in a manner that is almost spiritual.

The storytelling associated with the geography of war is described by Silko as a permutation of the place-naming tradition: “they repeated the stories about the good times in Oakland and San Diego; they repeated them like long medicine chants, the beer bottles pounding on the countertops like drums” (*Ceremony* 39). Instead of old tribal stories being repeated and celebrated, the new WWII geography replaces the tribal place-names. Tayo, Emo, Leroy and Harley, as Native American veterans who shared experiences in these places, have therefore created their own sub-culture. They all recognize the social currency of place-names and engage in storytelling because they desire to keep a certain culture and its geography alive. Yet this particular version of the place-naming tradition creates a detrimental relationship with their landscape because they are reinforcing a place-world ridden with what Betonie describes as witchcraft, a destructive force that runs diametrically opposed to Native spirituality and cultural unity.

Through the veterans’ bar stories, Silko invokes but also subverts the place-naming tradition. This becomes most explicit when Emo’s story about a night of drinking and sex is framed as an embedded text within the novel, using the oral literary forms evolved through the Native storytelling traditions. In all other instances within the novel embedded text is used to

interpolate Tayo's narrative with the Laguna Pueblo oral tradition of "hama-ha[h]" stories (Nelson, *Recovery* 13). These stories supplement the prose narrative in what Nelson deems "post-modern intertextuality" (3).²⁵ By framing a WWII story within the same format as a traditional Pueblo narrative, the novel structurally enacts the corruption of place-naming. The story Emo tells begins by invoking a place: "We went to this bar on 4th Ave., see" (Silko, *Ceremony* 53) and goes on to describe a sexual escapade with two women he met in the bar. "During the war Tayo [and his friends] learned about white men and Indian women" (Ibid.) and such a story represents the lesson about the paradox of their service in the war. The victories proceeding wartime translated into sexual accomplishments with white women that temporarily overturned rules of race. The place-names located within the geography of war represent a temporary integration with a non-Native landscape, a temporary forgetting of the Native American markers of racial identity. The "disgrace of Indian women who went with [white men]," (Ibid.) a reality that Tayo himself embodies in his shamed mixed-race identity, contrasts with the stories of masculine sexual conquest of white women. The veterans' storytelling practices represent a desire to re-inhabit the idealized geography of WWII, in which the Native American soldiers at last felt as if they "belonged to America" (39) and were successful in their sexual exploits with the white women they desired. Yet the darkness of this glorification of war becomes apparent when the sub-textual violence begins to emerge.

The ritualistic re-creation of this geography through their stories is unsustainable because it reinforces a place-world that is constitutionally toxic and antagonistic to Native American-ness. The places are indicators of the violent conquest over people and land which they

²⁵Together, the "hama-ha[h]" stories of Pa'caya'nyi, Nau'ts'ity'i and Hummingbird form a narrative "backbone" upon which Tayo's twentieth century story acts (Nelson, *Recovery* 14).

experienced not only abroad but in their daily lives as Native Americans: “the night progressed according to that ritual: from cursing the barren dry land the white man had left them, to talking about San Diego and the cities where the white women were still waiting for them to come back” (Silko, *Ceremony* 56). Because Native lands were taken using the same forces of othering and killing these veterans participated in during WWII, their relationship to the geography of war creates sickness within them, Silko suggests. Their idealized state as American soldiers is paradoxically tied to the painful Native American reality within the geographic confines of the reservation. Place-naming of WWII sites performs, at the level of the text, their detachment from the native Laguna landscape and coupled with the geography of drinking, constructs an unsustainable and toxic place-world.

The geography of drinking in *Ceremony* consists of a series of bars that stretch the length of Highway 66, which runs east-west from Albuquerque to Gallup, NM. These bars are: Dixie Tavern, Cerritos, Bibo, Y Bar and El Fidel. They are named in the text and experienced in the narrative present by the characters, which is told in the present tense in contrast to the sites of war named retrospectively in the past tense. These bars represent a geography deeply scarred by experiences in war, a social atmosphere traumatized to the point of habitual binge drinking and moments of intense violence among Tayo’s supposed friends. Although it resuscitates the geography of war, the geography of drinking is the place-world that is effectively *lived in* by Tayo and his veteran friends because they have lost their location within the spiritual place-world of their tribe. They navigate this place-world and tell stories about its places yet ultimately it constitutes a destructive social culture.

The place-names of bars are named in the text to convey stories and the lessons associated with them, the most notable being an incident when Tayo almost killed Emo in a fit of

rage: “Tayo knew he was referring to that time at Dixie Tavern” (Silko, *Ceremony* 21). The geography of drinking is navigated through migration “up the line” (22), from Budville to McCartys along the highway west of the reservation boundary line. This geography terminates in Gallup where Tayo sees Navajos, Zunis, Hopis and Lagunas “all of them slouched down against the dirty walls of the bars along Highway 66” (98), an image symbolic of the common situation of Native tribes vis-à-vis the American government. This is the end of the line, where geographic ties to the reservation have been forsaken for a life of living in cardboard houses under the bridge by the banks of the arroyo (stream) that runs through town. This life of homelessness and drinking was where Tayo grew up with his mother, before she handed him off to live with her family. The geography of drinking functions to locate a contemporary culture of Native Americans haunted by poverty, trauma and the lure of “white places” (113) outside the reservation. The lived experience of these places, as told in the novel’s present tense, represents the failed attempts of veterans to reconcile the geography of war within the geography of home.

The final geography in *Ceremony* is that of “home,” the native landscape that Tayo must recover through his healing ceremony. As Nelson describes it, the principle sites in this geography are Cubero, Mount Taylor, the Pa’to’ch Butte, Trinity Site and Laguna, all stated as place-names in the novel. Nelson’s detailed analysis of the role of landscape in the novel maps out clearly the movement of Tayo’s ceremony geographically as a recovery of a specific set of spiritual places. Tayo must learn the names and stories of these places and locate himself within them in order to heal. Until Tayo can recover the stability and function of his mental map, the geography of “home” is interwoven with the geographies of war and drinking.

The social custom of place-naming is traditionally limited to the tribal landscape yet it must now include a new portion of geography outside of the reservation, the state and the

country in this postcolonial, postwar novel. Tayo's place-world, constituted by significant sites of experience, is fragmented between the geographies of war, drinking, and home. These three systems organize all the place-names within Tayo's place-world. Tayo and his veteran friends travel to distant places where they have life-altering experiences; these places thus hold social currency. They also effectively constitute a postcolonial place-world, marked by sites outside the reservation. In this sense, the novel attempts to reconcile a new geographic definition of place-world, which includes not only the tribal geography but the "white geography," which Silko posits as a hybrid universe, given its production through Native eyes.

The process of healing is a process of reconciling these disparate geographies, of understanding the nature of postcolonial trauma, and then choosing to recover the spiritual landscape. In its construction of an expansive place-world the novel manifests the cultural condition of Native-Americans struggling to reconcile their spirituality with antagonist settler colonial forces of destitution, warfare and its wartime patriotism, trauma and "assimilationist" attitudes. The veterans in *Ceremony* must reconcile their service in the war with their allegiance to Native culture and therefore find themselves torn between two cultural geographies: one spiritual and the other patriotic. This struggle can be framed spatially because the tribal geography and the "white geography" are perceived as mutually exclusive, and therefore attempting to integrate these geographies, alongside severe PTSD, cause what is referred to in the novel as "sickness." The veterans all suffer from placelessness yet only Tayo seeks out a medicine man and is able to recover the spirituality of "place."

Once Tayo's trauma has been outlined geographically, in the depiction of competing place-worlds through traditions of place-naming, the novel shifts into a phase of healing. Tayo reaches a point of complete instability, he feels that "there was no place left for him" (Silko,

Ceremony 30) to occupy or relate to. “[Tayo] was tired of guarding himself against places and things which evoked the memories” (24); he decides at the novel’s midway point to confront the places and stories that haunt him. His grandmother seeks out a medicine man, a tribal elder deeply connected with the native landscape, who can guide Tayo in his recovery. The medicine man must heal Tayo “otherwise he will have to go away” (30), remarks his grandmother, back to the hospital or another nameless location. Tayo must become geographically bound and identify his location or else he risks being forever nameless.

The medicine men Ku’oosh and Betonie, spiritual leaders intimately connected with the Native landscape, are, the novel suggests, Tayo’s only hope for recovery. In both interactions it is evident that Tayo’s healing must occur within the context of place-naming. In keeping with the traditions of tribal culture, the medicine men possess the spiritual wisdom to heal sickness, yet because Tayo’s trauma is caused by forces greater than the cultural confines of the tribe the traditional ceremony cannot be performed. Instead, Tayo’s ceremony must be renovated to include a postcolonial geography. Not only must Tayo recover Trinity Site, the symbol of postcolonial warfare within the geographical limits of the Laguna reservation, he must also reconcile his experiences during the war in places such as Oakland, San Diego, Los Angeles, and the nameless Philippine Island that readers understand to be Luzon.

Tayo’s first visit with the traditional Laguna medicine man, Ku’oosh, thus makes apparent Tayo’s postcolonial place-world. Old Ku’oosh attempts a traditional place-naming exchange in order to understand Tayo’s trauma geographically yet he effectively fails and cannot understand Tayo’s sickness. Tayo then seeks out a second medicine man who engages Tayo in a contemporary place-naming practice, outlining a healing ceremony that follows the geography of Tayo’s trauma.

In Tayo's encounter with the first medicine man Ku'oosh, we learn how a place-name traditionally functions in the Laguna tribe. Although Tayo cannot recognize the name he is able to recognize the place because, despite his detachment, he has lived within the Laguna landscape. Tayo's interaction with this medicine man reveals how different their place-worlds are, identifying Tayo's sickness as geographic. The medicine man speaks in an "old dialect" which is "dense with place names [Tayo] had never heard" (Silko, *Ceremony* 31) yet there is one place whose meaning Tayo is able to recognize just as he feels the "shame tightening in his throat" (32), the shame of cultural detachment. The place is described but never named because the novel develops geographically through Tayo's frame of reference, through place-names that he hears and understands. Tayo does not understand the name of the place but recognizes the description: "a deep lava cave northeast of Laguna where bats flew out on summer evenings" (Ibid.). Tayo had experienced this place and therefore *knows* the story associated with the place, a story of the "old days" (Ibid.) that is associated with the Scalp Ceremony of the tribe. The three sentences in the text which proceed Tayo's recounting of his personal experience of this place convey the social mechanism of a place-name; first Tayo nods because he recognizes the place, second Tayo remembers the story associated with the place and third Tayo understands the message encoded in the place, he "knew that the old man had come for" (Ibid.). Even in the absence of the place-name, Tayo is able to enact this social custom successfully. Through the place-naming exchange with the medicine man, even without the name itself, Tayo is able to access a traditional cure for his sickness. Yet despite their common understanding that Tayo has killed in war and therefore needs a Scalp Ceremony in order to heal, the fact that the medicine man and Tayo have two different place-worlds makes the cure impossible. Tayo has participated in "white warfare—killing across great distances" (33) that corresponds to an expanded

geography Ku'oosh cannot conceive of. Ku'oosh admits: "there are some things we can't cure like we used to...not since the white people came" (34). The arrival of white people changed the geography of the tribe's place-world, forcing tribal members to experience "place" in a completely different way. As a traditional medicine man who can only conceive of traditional trauma and recovery, Ku'oosh cannot accept the cause and effect of Tayo's sickness. The fragile place-world is a postcolonial geography that corresponds to the "fragile world" (35) the other medicine man, Betonie, mentions.

Tayo's encounter with the second medicine man, the so-called "mixed-breed" Old Betonie, is predicated upon a place-name exchange within a radically different geography, one altered to accommodate colonization. Given Betonie's belief in revising the ceremony, the place-names have also been renovated. Betonie explains that: "after the white people came, elements in this world began to shift; and it became necessary to create new ceremonies" (Silko, *Ceremony* 116). As places in the world began to shift and created a new postcolonial experience of "place," the ceremonies too needed to change or else they became powerless. Betonie believes in adapting to changing conditions instead of holding on to an impossible place-world, one that effectively no longer exists. Betonie outlines a ceremony that can heal Tayo because he understands the geography of his trauma, an understanding that is enacted through a contemporary place-naming exchange. I believe that we are supposed to read Ku'oosh as holding on to to a place-world that no longer exists, in which all experience (trauma, recovery and otherwise) can be located within a Native map of the universe. By allowing Betonie to re-imagine the healing ceremony appropriate to Tayo's trauma, Silko presents a state of affairs in

which acknowledging a postcolonial place-world and engaging in “hybridist” geographic recovery produces healing.²⁶

Upon entering the medicine man’s hut Tayo sees the bundles of newspapers, telephone books and calendars that fill the space. Reading (white) place-names: “St. Louis, Seattle, New York, Oakland,” on the newspapers makes Tayo realize “another dimension to the old man’s room” (Silko, *Ceremony* 110). This different “dimension” is a materialization of an expanded geography. Betonie has collected all these markers of place and time to anthologize stories because all of the documents “have stories alive in them” (112). He explains that in the old days, a medicine man didn’t need these maps, but nowadays that has changed because the “world began to shift” (116) and its geography changed. Betonie believes that the forces of colonization have fundamentally altered the Native place-world. Tayo’s sickness is caused by not being able to navigate this new place-world and therefore Betonie must give Tayo “an outline of a cognitive map of the ceremony” (Nelson, *Function* 145).

In order to help Tayo heal he must know the places and their stories because he must be able to geographically locate his trauma. Betonie begins by telling Tayo of his travels to Chicago, California and St. Louis, moments in which he left the reservation and began to visit “white places.” After his first train-ride to Chicago he began to collect the telephone books in order to start “keeping track of things” (Silko, *Ceremony* 112), to remember these new names. In this expansive place-world the sheer amount of places and their stories were so many that they had to be documented. The oral tradition of place-naming within the tribe depended on the geography being encoded in the memories of medicine men and tribal members, but the

²⁶ See Krupat’s *The Voice in the Margin* and Pulitano’s *Towards a Native American Critical Theory* for “hybridism” as ethical stance in Native American cultural theory.

postcolonial place-world functions by completely different mechanisms, relying on print media for the preservation of knowledge rather than oral exchange. Tayo realizes that “his cure would be found only in something great and inclusive of everything” (116), which can be read as a ceremony inclusive of an expanded postcolonial geography.

As the novel begins, describing his wartime experiences, there are no place-names mentioned. As sites of trauma, Tayo does not have the spiritual health to confront these stories and to name them as constituents of his place-world. By the time he meets the second medicine man, Betonie, Tayo is finally able to understand his trauma, to name the “Philippine jungles” (Silko, *Ceremony* 114) and to tell the stories of these sites of trauma. When he states “we were in the Philippine jungles” (Ibid.), Tayo is locating his trauma and thus himself for the first time in the novel. His geographic recovery begins from this location, becoming the story of a nameless “white place” (113) in which he was invisible (the hospital in Los Angeles), the collapsing of thousands of miles that brought Uncle Josiah into the Philippine jungle, and the related stories of Josiah, Rocky and Emo. Silko has Tayo recount the traumatic experiences within fragmented narration, reflecting for Betonie his placelessness. Tayo defines his own trauma as the collapsing of distances between Laguna and the Philippines that brought Josiah to the jungles even though he acknowledges “he couldn’t have been there” (114). Tayo traces this event to Josiah’s death, which occurred while Tayo was away at war. He believes that Josiah died because “there was no one to help him search for the cattle after they were stolen” (Ibid.). Betonie determines that in order to heal Tayo must recover the cattle, which have been stolen by a white man. These cattle now reside on Mount Taylor, the spiritual center of the Laguna universe yet which is now termed “Floyd Lee’s land,” a place-name that indicates land stolen from the tribe. The first step in completing the ceremony is recovering these cattle and from there Tayo can find the spiritual

force of Ts'its'tsi'nako, creator of the Pueblo universe. Once Tayo recovers the “reenerative spirit” (143), incarnate in the young woman on Mount Taylor, Ts'eh and the Night Swan he can move towards defeating the “Destroyers” (162), incarnate in Emo and his comrades. Betonie understands the place-world that Tayo is attempting to navigate as one that includes the trauma of war-crimes, being mixed-breed, nuclear warfare and other manifestations of the darkness of postcolonialism.

Betonie explains that there is no geographic limit to the witchcraft: “when it was set loose it ranged everywhere, from the mountains and the plains to the towns and cities; rivers and oceans never stopped it” (Silko, *Ceremony* 122). The witchcraft has entered and poisoned the tribe's geography as well as places beyond the United States. Tayo initially believes that the witchcraft is the white people and that the sickness “comes from their wars, their bombs, their lies” (Ibid.), a statement which the first medicine man Ku'oosh could not likely understand. Because he himself has existed within the “white geography,” Betonie can understand this modern warfare and its implications. He tells Tayo that the witchcraft is greater than that, “they want us to believe all evil resides in with white people...they want us to separate ourselves from white people, to be ignorant and helpless as we watch our own destruction” (Ibid.). Betonie doesn't believe the sickness resides in the “white geography” Tayo has experienced, it is much greater than that. Although Tayo locates his sickness in Los Angeles and a nameless Philippine Island, he acknowledges its expansive quality. A doctor cites “reports not[ing] that since the Second World War a pattern of drinking and violence, not previously seen before, is emerging among Indian veterans” yet Tayo responds that “it's more than that. I can feel it. It's been going on for a long time” (49). The “sickness” is a cultural condition that began with colonization, long before Tayo's lifetime. The sickness can therefore be read as symptomatic of a widespread

geographical loss of place, systematically taken from the tribes by successive waves of European colonizers and Euro-American settlers.

Tayo must not only recover places within his spiritual landscape but additionally places far beyond, extending to California and the Philippines. In Tayo and Betonie's place-naming exchange in the ceremonial hogan it became apparent to Tayo the geographic magnitude of his sickness. Although the spiritual ceremony must reconnect Tayo with his native landscape and therefore occurs within that landscape, there is a larger process of healing at work in the novel. The ceremony of the text-at-large is dependent upon Tayo confronting the traumatic experiences that have occurred to him through his (and the text's) relocation to that site of trauma. Tayo must also decisively reject the geographies of war and drinking, along with their value, in order to fully embrace the geography of "home." Ultimately, by reading Tayo's ceremony within the expansive geography of the text's entire place world, we can reconceptualize the geography of "home" to include a much larger history and geography which Tayo must come to peace with. Understanding Native American spiritual geography renders comprehensible the treatment of place-names within the narrative yet as the novel names places in which Tayo either locates his sickness or healing, these places are also materialized as constituents of the novel's place-world. Recognizing Native American epistemology alongside Native American spirituality requires place-names construct a geography dialectically related to their history.

Chapter Two: The Text as Place-World

The cultural construction of “place” within Native American spirituality and epistemology must inform any attempts at mapping the novel’s geography and tracing the conditions of its place-world. A novel can be analyzed as a place-world by mapping subtextual geographies and allowing implied space to become materialized. A place-world, as a conceptual model, accommodates the complexities of lived experience in place. It enables the geography of the text, traditionally conceived as two-dimensional, to become multidimensional, incorporating spaces of “dwelling” as well as the complex trifecta of “place, space and environment” (Rainwater 119; Harvey 44). A place-world is existed in and moved through, it is subjective and charged with emotionality. We can reconstruct the novel’s place-world by reading place-names, geographical proper nouns, as the textual indicators of “place” within the novel.²⁷ As Silko describes the process of writing *Ceremony*: “I remade the place in words” (*Ceremony* xv).

The novel’s geography always exists as a necessary byproduct of the narrative arc and with imaginative critical reading its map can be reconstructed. Even the mention of one place-name within the narrative implies the existence of an entire place-world. Every place-name works to expose, materialize, and reinforce the novel’s subtextual geography. Whether or not they realize it, readers always recognize a spatial logic to the text, which makes the fictional world recognizable. A novel passively *implies* space but actively *constructs* place in the act of writing. Tracing geography enables the implicit spatial characteristics of a novel to become explicit. Each place named in the text has significance because it is distinguished as a “place”

²⁷ See Rainwater’s *The Semiotics of Dwelling*, Nelson’s *The Function of the Landscape in Ceremony*, Mott’s *Digitizing Leslie Marmon Silko’s Ceremony* and Swan’s *Laguna Symbolic Geography and Leslie Marmon Silko’s Ceremony* for analysis of the concept of “place” within the novel.

within the novel's spatial construction of narrative.²⁸ The place-world is constructed either through the haptic movement of characters from place to place or in references to places that hold stories of representational importance.

Mapping allows each place to be analyzed as such and not just as a name or secondary quality of an event. Places locate narrative events and hold representational power. Each place-name has specific meaning as a discrete object in its identification. It necessarily exists in relation to other places, within an implied map.

Taken together, all of the places named in *Ceremony* comprise a place-world and are identified based on their location within this network of sites. The place-world can be defined by decontextualizing the place-names, removing them from their embeddedness in the narrative geography. It is only through a mapping of all the novel's place-names that an accurate analysis of the treatment of place-naming in *Ceremony* can begin. Isolating the 292 geographical proper nouns exposes the entire constellation of place-names in *Ceremony*, spanning from California to the Pacific Islands. These places are organized according to specific geographies which are in conflict with each other: the Philippine Islands where Tayo, the protagonist, and his Native American friends served during WWII, the American cities they experienced as soldiers before and after being deployed, and the geography of the Laguna Pueblo tribe of New Mexico which constitutes Tayo's "home" landscape. These geographies not only organize the treatment of place-naming within the narrative, they also function structurally to depict a fragmented place-world.

²⁸ This logic of place v. space has been expounded within film theory in similar ways, see Hopkins's *A Mapping of Cinematic Places* and Koeck's *Cine-scapes*. Most explicitly: "film makes space, takes place as narrative" (Koeck 22).

In order to understand the construction of *Ceremony*'s place-world it is necessary to understand not only the Native religion which informs the fictionalized narrative but also the epistemological framework that constructs a subtextual geography. The novel begins with embedded text describing Thought-Woman materializing the novel through naming its "things."²⁹ Silko writes: "I'm telling you the story she is thinking," the story that comes into being when "Thought-Woman, the spider, / named things and / as she named them / they appeared" (*Ceremony* 1). Thought-Woman, Ts'its'tsi'nako, is the creator of the Pueblo universe and the meta-narrator of the novel. In this invocation, Silko symbolically defers the novel's authorship to the creator of the Pueblo universe, signifying that although the subsequent narrative is a fictional world, it imitates the epistemology of the Pueblo real world. This convention is the belief that "reality" is a product of semiosis and therefore the novel's world is materialized and becomes "real" as it is written (Rainwater 117). In extending the logic of Pueblo world-making through language, I would like to apply Native American epistemology specifically to the naming of places within *Ceremony*. The performativity through which word creates world means that *Ceremony* not only references the tradition of place-naming, but enacts it. Place-names narrate a fictionalized history that models a possible state of geographic recovery yet this claim must be substantiated through the novel's subtextual geography given the novel's epistemological claim. Tayo's trauma is performed structurally and therefore the novel enacts the place-naming tradition to manifest a fragmented place-world which I will argue does not recover alongside the narrative. In order to read the subtextual geography that the novel constructs as it

²⁹ For a detailed analysis of the role of embedded text within *Ceremony* see Nelson's *The Recovery of Tradition*.

narrates this chapter will present a model for reading the structure of *Ceremony*, predicated upon the decontextualization of place-names.

Place-names materialize a place-world in the novel that is not entirely explored IN the narrative. In order to access the geography of places that place-names reference alongside the stories, structural analysis must reconstruct the geography through text. The fact that place-naming codifies space through language opens the practice to literary analysis, which generates meaning by reading the *name as place*. Yet place-names have a dual representational role signifying both: “name as place” and “place as name.”³⁰

In Basso’s anthropological account, the non-Native’s failure to understand the complete equivalence between the place and its story is an epistemological barrier—

a barrier to constructing appropriate sense and significance which arises from the fact that all views articulated by Western Apache people are informed by their experience in a culturally constituted world of objects and events with which most of us are unfamiliar (39).

“Outsider” critics cannot implicitly understand the construction of history and geography specific to Native American place-worlds. This limit to anthropological understanding is magnified within the fictional world of a novel such as *Ceremony*. Silko blends Native and non-Native storytelling in order to construct a postcolonial place-world; nevertheless, the role of embedded text and Native storytelling within the novel is highly complex and esoteric.

The representational role of place-names within the novel’s fictionalized history is expressed through the narrative yet within the novel’s subtextual geography only their structural

³⁰ Unpacking the mechanisms that construct the “place as name” requires a phenomenological investigation that has been conducted, most notably, by the scholar Edward S. Casey. See Casey’s *Between Geography and Philosophy* as well as *Getting Back to Place*.

logic can generate meaning. As an outsider critic I can see the structure of the place-world even though I cannot navigate it.³¹ The subtextual geography is expressed through the *way* place-names function instead of *what* they function. Yet I can analyze the structural mechanisms through which word and image, narrative and site, time and space are fused. By structural mechanism I mean the ordering of events and places. Engaging in structural analysis provides an alternative to the semiotic distance described by Basso. This structural analysis must begin with an acknowledgment of my location as outsider critic, literally *outside* the limits of a Native American place-world. Yet when decontextualized and analyzed outside discourse, the referential power of place-names is lost.

Ultimately, place-names are discrete symbols which simultaneously reference both history and geography yet they must first be analyzed according to these two separate functions: representational and structural. Embracing the function of place-names within *Ceremony* means acknowledging their dialectical quality because place-names not only narrate Tayo's fictionalized history but construct a subtextual geography. I am analyzing the novel's history and geography separately until the final chapter, when a model for resolving the dialectic tension is theorized. In mapping the subtextual geography of *Ceremony*, I want to consider its relationship to the narrative. The ethical dilemma of mapping is allowing the stories, the names, to speak alongside the places, restoring the dual function to the symbol. (Place-names only construct a meaningful place-world when they form part of a narrative and thus in my thesis's final chapter I will respond to the necessity of mapping history alongside geography.)

³¹ For more on "outsider," meaning non-Native, criticism see McKegney's *Strategies for Ethical Engagement*.

Chapter Three: Chronotopic Narration

In this and the following chapter, I turn to the theorizations of Mikhail Bakhtin and Franco Moretti, both of whom produce models for understanding subtextual geographies separately from the novel's narrative. Bakhtin's model for "chronotopes" are essentially literary place-names, place-names that exist within the fictional worlds of text. Bakhtin analyzes the space-time structure of novels in order to isolate moments in which space and time, the novel's history and geography, fuse within place. Bakhtin's model of "chronotopic narration" posits that place-names actively construct and shape a place-world and therefore the novel enacts the place-naming tradition. Yet Bakhtin is not interested in mapping chronotopes, or place-names, and so I turn to Moretti's model of "distant reading," which argues for complete decontextualization of place-names from the text in order to understand comprehensively the structure of the novel's place-world. Distant reading only models structural meaning because it does not consider the story associated with the place-name. Structural analysis ultimately exposes the fact that Tayo's healing does not correspond to a healing of the novel's subtextual geography. In order to understand how the novel enacts the place-naming tradition to actively shape the subtextual geography, I will first turn—by way of Basso—to Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of "chronotope."

Basso's anthropological study actually acknowledges the literary critical implications of the Native tradition of place-naming. In a brief aside, he mentions a concept in literary theory he sees as equivalent to place-names: the "chronotope." Bakhtin's theory of chronotopes in literature elucidates the structural function of place-names in *Ceremony* as they shape the novel's particular history and geography. In this text, chronotopes dictate the structuring of event within the novel, in order to, as I will argue, embody and manifest trauma. Reading *place-names* as

chronotopes enables us to recognize how the novel actually enacts the tradition of place-naming, organizing narrative events as a map of a fragmented place-world.

The “chronotope”—literally “time-space” —was first described by Mikhail Bakhtin in his 1937 essay “Forms of Time and the Chronotope in the Novel,” as the configuration of time and space in literary narrative, which, he argues, varies widely among different genre.

Paraphrasing Bakhtin, Basso defines chronotopes as “points in the geography of a community where time and space intersect and fuse” and therefore they function “as monuments to the community itself, as symbols of it, as forces operating to shape its members’ images of themselves” (Basso 62). Bakhtin focuses on the chronotope’s existence in literature but also acknowledges that time-space is a concept relevant to other aspects of culture. Unknown to Bakhtin, the Native tradition of place-naming reflects just such a non-literary instance; as Basso observes, since the place-names are tools, “indispensable mnemonic pegs on which to hang the moral teachings of their history...such locations present themselves as instances of what Mikhail Bakhtin has called *chronotopes*” (Ibid.).

The chronotope is a literary place-name that describes a fictional geography and history instead of an actual one. Bakhtin’s chronotopes are literary equivalents to place-names because they map the social world of the text. Instead of place-names existing in spoken discourse amongst members of the tribe the chronotope appears in written language, specifically in fictional text. Bakhtin enables the place-name to leave its physical world and to enter the fictional world of the text by tracing its appearance in literature. His analysis is applied to multiple genres of literature, each of which have their own fictional structuring of space and time. Bakhtin’s essay is critical for understanding how place-names exist within fictional worlds and how their role of marking the tribe’s history and geography is translated to an organizational

role within the text. The set of qualities Bakhtin explains produces insight into how place-names appear in literature because it acknowledges the fictional structuring of space and time that accompany them. The fusion of space and time that creates chronotopes within text are directly equivalent to the mechanisms that create a place-name. Bakhtin's analysis explains how place-names can exist within text and maintain their function as signifying both a site and story.

Viewing spatial and temporal expanses in the novel from a bird's eye view ultimately reveals to Bakhtin their "intrinsic interconnectedness" (84). Chronotopes' interconnectedness is manifest in discrete nodes within the narrative at which the two axis intersect. By tracing the passage of space and time within a fictional narrative Bakhtin isolates moments in the text where the two trajectories fuse: where "time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible" and "space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time and history and the enduring character of a people" (85). The chronotopes function by exposing the organization of space and time within the novel so that implicit references to the spatio-temporal infrastructure are made explicit. Space and time are necessary conditions for the narrative, they allow the novel's fictional world to be recognized *as a world* and therefore the infrastructure of these two forces provides a narrative with coherence. Chronotopes are points in which the novel's implicit forms of organization are made *whole* and visible. In other words, reading for the operations of chronotope in a novel entails treating space and time no longer as secondary values used to describe the narrative, but as central actors in the novel with their own distinct characteristics.

According to Bakhtin's model, which focuses on chronotopic narration among literary genres, Native American literature would correspond to a unique structuring of space and time. As Bakhtin describes the relevance of chronotopes for the real world beyond literary texts, his

theory allows for chronotopes to exist as the place-names Basso explains. Bakhtin explains that out of “the actual chronotopes of our world (which serve as the source of representation) emerge the reflected and *created* chronotopes of the world represented in the work (in the text)” (253). Hypothetically, all cultures within given historical periods have a distinct treatment of chronotopes in the real world; Native American cultures, however, make explicit the existence of “actual chronotopes” through traditions of place-naming.

Bakhtin explains that “every entry in the sphere of meaning is accomplished only through the gates of the chronotope”—it must take on the “*form of a sign*” (258). Since we all exist in space and time we are surrounded by actual chronotopes, embodiments of geography and history. The chronotope becomes a defining quality for all expression because everything must have a specific location in space and time. Which is to say, every *thing* is, in a way, also a place on the map. The literary chronotope makes explicit and visible the fact that all things exist simultaneously in *both* time and space. In real life there can be no separation between time and space. Writes Bakhtin, “*living* artistic perception (which also of course involves thought, but not abstract thought)...seizes on the chronotope in all its wholeness and fullness” (243). There is a constant exchange between the fictional world of chronotopes and the real-world of chronotopes, “the work and the world represented in it enter the real world and enrich it, and the real world enters the work and its world as part of the process of creation” (254). The model of chronotope is therefore highly useful to analyze the structure of *Ceremony* because it enables the enigmatic quality of place-names to be analyzed within literature as products of the unique qualities of Native American history and geography (that generate the “actual chronotopes” of place-names).

Bakhtin’s analysis foregrounds the mechanism through which place-names construct a place-world because, as he notes, “it is precisely the chronotope that provides the ground

essential for the showing forth, the representability of events” (250). Chronotopes “structure a representation of events” and therefore their principle function is to serve as “organizing centers for the narrative” (Ibid.). Applying this concept to *Ceremony*, I want to argue that place-names actively shape the structuring of events according to their meaning.

Each place-name mentioned in the text actively constructs and defines the novel’s place-world by shaping its space-time structure. The three geographies (of war, drinking and home) compete within Tayo’s mind and all merge into one another given the atemporal method of storytelling. The overlapping maps are manifest structurally in points of contact *between* maps, places in which geographies merge together. Tracing the action of these geographic sites shows how the temporal organization of the novel develops according to the spatial organization. Using sites of contact Silko disrupts the temporal logic of the text to organize the text based on relationships between places. The novel not only discusses history and geography within its narrative, it manipulates these two axes through its chronological ordering, to ultimately prioritize *spatial* logic over *temporal* logic in the telling of Tayo’s story.

As previously noted, much of the scholarship on the novel argues that Tayo’s trauma is a formal strategy enacted through fragmentation of the narrative. Joanne Lipson Freed, for example, compellingly argues that the novel “heals” because the text regains its chronological linearity. Yet, reading the novel via the epistemological claims of Native American sacred geography refutes this argument. *Ceremony*’s narrative structure is explicitly spatial and defines the novel’s subtextual geography as a critical component of the novel’s enactment of trauma. What Freed characterizes as “the story gradually becom[ing] more linear and grounded in the presence as the novel progresses and Tayo begins to heal” (229) is not reflected within the geography of the text, which actively resists healing. The fictionalized history of Tayo’s healing

creates an increasingly “comprehensible narrative” (Ibid.) because the story principally narrates Tayo’s personal healing; yet if we are to understand the novel’s implications for a larger cultural healing we must investigate the ceremony-at-large. If, as Freed claims, “Silko’s novel does not merely describe the ceremony that Tayo carries out but also *enacts* a ceremony *in which we as readers participate*” (Ibid.), this ceremony-at-large must be read within the novel’s entire place-world, and not simply the spiritual geography that Tayo recovers.³²

The novel is underwritten by a Native epistemological claim, stated in the opening and closing of the text, via Silko’s recreation of Thought-Woman. This claim asks us to consider the novel as materializing a place-world through acts of naming. Native American sacred geography prioritizes geography as an indicator of history’s fictionalized narrative. As Silko writes: “the precise date of the incident is often less important than the place or location of the happening” (*Yellow* 33), an implicit condition within the narrative that invites critical readers to prioritize the novel’s geographical organization over the chronological organization. Given what Deloria has specifically called “spatial conception of reality” that accompanies Native “sacred geography,” we must reconsider the way in which a fictionalized history is principally told through place (76, 122). If we accept Basso’s claim that “what matters most is *where* events occurred, not when” (31), we are invited to prioritize the geography over the history in regard to structural enactment of the place-naming tradition. The fact that Silko constructed the novel based upon a Pueblo view of the universe that prioritizes geography over history is evident within Silko’s treatment of place-names, which defines Tayo’s trauma geographically within the narrative and within what I am arguing is its spatial subtext.

³² The novel’s performativity in regards to the enactment of a ceremony has also been discussed by James Ruppert, via the notion of “speech-as-action” (184), in *No Boundaries, Only Transitions*.

Silko constructed the novel out of “bundles of stories,” distinct events that are intentionally dis-ordered both chronologically and geographically (Piper 90). The atemporality of the novel manifests Tayo’s trauma within the narrative and restoring chronological linearity to the narrative ostensibly enables healing to be modelled within the novel’s fictionalized history (of Tayo’s personal narrative). Yet the lack of geographic organization manifests a problematized Native geography, a place-world at large that is unable to heal. Since Native American worldview traditionally binds story to place, the fact that the “bundles of stories” do not correspond to distinct sites additionally manifests Tayo’s placeless-ness structurally, as a condition of the text. One of the central concerns of the novel is that the stories and characters are not bound in place. As Silko defines Tayo’s trauma geographically through place-names she simultaneously constructs a problematized place-world.

The narrative is organized according to an alternative space-time logic that Elaine Jahner refers to as “experience of event rather than sequentially motivated action” (41).³³ Although Jahner focuses on the “mythic prototype” modelled in the novel’s embedded texts and does not analyze the “contemporary action” (44) of the traumatic narrative, I would like to leverage her concept towards unpacking the latter. Pushing Jahner’s statement that “entanglement is Silko’s main metaphor for describing obstacles to the event experience” (Ibid.) I am arguing that the novel’s events are not just metaphorically, but structurally entangled. In this way, I am interested in showing the overall process that dictates the novel’s event structure.

What Jahner terms the novel’s “experience of event” is principally geographic, organized by place-names that construct a fragmented place-world. The novel develops through Tayo’s

³³ I agree with the definition of event that Jahner cites: “events are...complex structures consisting of states and a (change) relation over these states” (Teunis van Dijis in Jahner 50).

experience of his place-world organized not by a chronological sequence but by a spatial sequence defined by the narrative, the geography of his ceremony. In keeping with Native sacred geography, a geographic organization of the place-world must precede a re-shaping of Tayo's fictionalized history to generate healing. Within the model for healing that Betonie creates, "event" is optimally defined geographically as "place," driving the plot's desire to be place-bound. The pattern of the ceremony Betonie outlines is constituted of the stories marked by "cattle," "mountain," and "woman" (Silko, *Ceremony* 141) yet is fundamentally geographic because Tayo must move from place to place in order to learn the stories. Tayo cannot recognize the story until he is geographically located within place and, on a larger scale, Tayo cannot recover the Native spirituality until he has recovered the spiritual geography. Even more, the fact that Tayo's recovery is dictated geographically means that as his spiritual geography impinges on his spiritual healing, the fragmented place-world must heal for the ceremony-at-large to be completed.

Tayo initially seeks to recover a pre-colonial place-world in which "distances and days existed in themselves then; they all had a story. They were not barriers. If a person wanted to get to the moon, there was a way; it all depended on whether or not they knew the directions... it depended on whether you knew the story of how others before you had gone" (Silko, *Ceremony* 18). Optimally, by recovering the ability to name places, Tayo's fictionalized narrative would become place-bound. Within the ceremony-at-large, the place-world of the novel can only heal through gaining geographic coherence, by binding story to place through naming.

The chronotope in *Ceremony* ultimately marks the epistemological privileging of space over time in the Native sacred geography that informs the narrative as the spatial organization of the text dictates its temporal logic. The novel develops by expanding in geographic complexity,

rather than following a chronological logic, which means that the narrative is fundamentally atemporal. The chronology of the narrative is secondary to the active mapping of a fragmented place-world. As the novel names places to construct its place-world, the space-time fabric of the text shifts to accommodate each new place and its story. Instead of the narrative developing chronologically, or tracing continuous movement across landscapes, the disjointed quality of space-time here allows the event structure to take on a chronotopic quality which functions to represent Tayo's destabilized place-world and then process of recovery.

Mapping the place-names and geographies exposes the spatial and temporal disjointedness of the novel. The place-names each have a multitude of different stories attached that correspond to different historical moments. The lack of temporal organization in the text is apparent because even though there is no clear chronology we have a sense of the novel's geography. This is only because *time is told through place*. We can therefore recognize different historical periods based upon the geography named: moments bound in the historical past of WWII and to moments after Tayo's return and moments in his past. Tayo's ceremony occurs in the present tense, although it is seemingly unbound in time and includes a remembering of moments in the past. Structurally, time in the novel is only concretely defined as before the war, a long time ago, or after the war. Specific moments in history are located in sites of WWII or strewn across the Laguna landscape in sites that hold various historical moments. Where the story happens is more important than when it happens. Tayo's ceremony drives him to travel through time in order to geographically reconstruct his fragmented place-world and to reclaim the ability to navigate his place-world. Almost every single place-name in the text is revisited in different historical moments yet tracing the synapse between two historical moments connected

by place shows how the narrative adheres to a certain space-time structure that prioritizes the representation of place.

The novel's structurally non-linear, fragmented narration not only creates a reading experience of traumatic memory, read geographically it creates an experience of placeless-ness. The fact that the stories are no longer bound in place means that as Tayo cannot navigate his place-world, the novel's geography is difficult for readers to navigate. The structural disorganization renders the condition of Tayo's place-world the condition of the text-at-large. In order to present a problematized place-world, the narrative shifts between different temporal geographies all linked by a single place. The "experience of event" which organizes the narrative is presented through distinct geographic locations that are linked together *exclusively through spatial logic*. This is the mechanism through which Tayo's trauma is enacted structurally within the place-world of the text as placeless-ness.

In the book's opening pages, the symbol of a deer exposes the instability of Tayo's place-world. The deer models within the narrative the structural treatment of Tayo's fragmentation. In order to heal, Tayo tries to "think of something that wasn't unraveled or tied in knots to the past - something that existed by itself; standing alone like a deer" (Silko, *Ceremony* 6) yet the image of the deer quickly morphs into the deer he and Rocky hunted a long time ago before the war and then he returns to a moment during the war when him and Rocky were oiling their rifles talking about the deer. From the very first pages of the book, the narrative shuttles between stories such as this: before the war, during the war and after the war, all bound together by symbolic strands such as "deer" or "jungle rain." Structurally, the fragmentation of narrative occurs through sites of contact, locations that join together competing geographies in order to expose the instability of the text's place-world. The places of contact within the narrative serve to expose Tayo's

placelessness by linking together different geographies all bound by the experience of event within one place.

The ability of the move to skip between different moments and time and geographical places, i.e. present as a fragmented place-world, is enabled due to these sites of contact, places which locate a multitude of competing stories. This merging of geographies is a condition of the text, structured through narratives spliced together that reference the same places. The principal instability for Tayo is between the geography of war and the geography of home. When Tayo is in the Philippines, he hallucinates people from the Laguna landscape and once he has returned home his body is continually transported back to the sites of war. Additionally, he participates in his fellow veterans' reenactment of the geography of war. As the veterans are sitting in bars within the geography of drinking, they return to the geography of war by invoking place-names such as San Diego, Oakland, Los Angeles and America. These geographical translocations are enacted by the text because the narrative returns to those sites and recounts the stories associated with them. It is in this sense that the novel's narrative structure reorganizes space and time to convey the placeless-ness of its characters.

One example from Tayo's place-world is the bridge in Gallup, which embodies memories of Tayo's youth but transports Tayo to a similar bridge in San Diego within the geography of war. The story in the text recounts Tayo as a child living under the bridge on the banks of the arroyo with his mother, in a cardboard box with other Natives who had left the reservation. His mother would regularly leave him to engage in sex work in the town, and therefore that space had connotations of sadness and abandonment, of him watching the headlights pass on the bridge ahead. The bridge brought cops, Mexican men looking for women and white men who yelled at them, throwing empty bottles. The next story is Tayo's return to the bridge, with Robert, where

he tossed coins to a young man asking for money and then watched him walk up “toward a bar south of the bridge, to wait for it to open” (Silko, *Ceremony* 106). The act of throwing a coin reminded him of the small bridge in San Diego, where he stood with the other soldiers and their dates tossing coins in the water the night before they were shipped out to the South Pacific. The three moments in time are bound together in one place. As Tayo throws the coin to the young Navajo he makes the same wish that Rocky had made in San Diego, for a safe return. He could be wishing that for the Natives who “would go home, sooner or later” (Ibid.) back to the reservation, or for himself. Tayo desires a safe return back from the geography of war and from his difficult childhood, back to his home landscape. Although the bridge is not a place-name in the text, it still functions as a locus of events grounded in a specific geographical location.

The role of Trinity Site, as a final point of contact within the narrative, is to expose the larger cartographic pattern of the text. It is a point at which the geography of home and the geography of war intersect. Trinity Site, where the first atomic bomb was detonated, is where “the pattern of the ceremony was completed” (Silko, *Ceremony* 228). Nearing the end of his ceremony Tayo is physically located at Jackpile Mine yet realizes his proximity to this site and identifies its symbolic importance. Trinity Site allows him to recognize the witchcraft behind the destabilization of his place-world, the root of his trauma. The symbolism of this site makes it the “point of convergence” for the witchcraft. Trinity Site is “on land the government took from Cochiti Pueblo” (Ibid.), locating it within the Pueblo tribe’s contested landscape. The atomic bomb has enacted history’s most catastrophic attacks upon physical land and the people who inhabit it. The force that takes place off the map becomes explicit in sites of contact where “lines,” or paths, converge. Tayo locates his trauma as the novel’s initial dislocation between the geography of home and war, and “he recognized why the Japanese voices had merged with

Laguna voices, with Josiah's voice and Rocky's voice" (Ibid.). Tayo is able to identify the corrosion of his mental map within a larger network of places and names; "the lines of cultures and worlds were drawn in flat dark lines on fine light sand, converging in the middle of the witchery's final ceremonial sand painting" (Ibid.).

Being able to name the Trinity Site and to recognize the function of its story heals Tayo. He recounts the story of the government trucks first arriving at Jackpile Mine, 300 miles away and creating what would become the world's largest open-pit uranium mine. He then recounts the story of his grandmother witnessing the blinding flash of light (the explosion occurred on July 16, 1945). And then he realizes his proximity to Trinity Site, where the mined uranium was synthesized to create the atomic bomb. He is able to see "the way all the stories fit together—the old stories, the war stories, their stories—to become the story that was still being told" (Silko, *Ceremony* 229). He is finally able to reconcile the competing geographies and their corresponding stories into one pattern that organizes his fragmented place-world. Tayo sees how the geographies of different place-worlds all collide, worlds that prior to Trinity Site (and other historical sites of catastrophic contact) would have never met. These worlds were in WWII "united by a circle of death that devoured people in cities twelve thousand miles away, victims who had never known these mesas" (228). The witchcraft is what fragments the novel's place-world, the evil force which overturns distances and time to wreak destruction over land and history.

In naming Trinity Site Tayo recognizes how places destabilize geographies through their internalization of trauma. Given Trinity Site's personal relevance to Tayo, as linking his geography of home and geography of war, it heals him because it restores logic to his place-world. Tayo chooses to uphold the geography of home against the witchcraft that erodes the

order of his map. In understanding the witchcraft that unites his geographies Tayo is able to recognize the logic to the fragmentation of his place-world. Through the spiritual ceremony, Tayo reconnects with his native landscape and recovers the stories throughout his geographic journey. Tayo recovers his geographic stability via recovering the social and navigational function of place-names. As he moves through his home landscape in the final stages of the ceremony, he is able to navigate his place-world as well as to participate in the social world of the Laguna tribe.

As Tayo is able to name Trinity Site and to recognize the implications of its story, his healing is finally enacted through place-naming. In recognizing the logic of witchcraft that has fragmented his place-world, he is able to become place-bound. This organization becomes a symptom of the text as the novel assumes linearity towards its close. All the stories begin to fit together as Tayo begins to heal and the novel recovers its space-time logic yet the “pattern” does not organize the subtextual geography of the novel’s place-world. Tayo’s geographic healing is modelled within the fictionalized narrative and enacted *only* within the fictionalized narrative. The stories become organized, recovering chronological linearity, yet the model for healing does not impinge on the geographic organization. Although Tayo is able to recover his spiritual geography the novel does not enact a geographic recovery because ultimately the witchcraft is much greater than Tayo’s place-world. Trinity Site is one point of convergence yet the witchcraft had “no end to it; it knew no boundaries” (Silko, *Ceremony* 228), it crosses geographies and corrodes at the order of all place-worlds. In this novel, the witchcraft is manifest in the Second World War yet it is only one moment within a larger pattern.

The novel concludes with an acknowledgement of the systemic cultural need for healing despite the success of Tayo’s ceremony. The final sentence of the book (before the embedded

text invokes the witchery's darkness) makes explicit the lost function of place-names at large. Tayo's grandmother states: "it seems like I already heard these stories before...only thing is, the names sound different" (Silko, *Ceremony* 242). The concluding voice, of an elder tribal member, is a prophecy of the map's continual erosion. The stories will continue to be repeated, but they are given new names. Place-names, therefore, manifest the changing conditions of the Laguna land because the names have lost their ability to describe the places the characters inhabit. The cynical outlook at the novel's end on the resilience of the place-naming tradition necessitates a reconsideration of our role as readers.

If we adhere to the novel's epistemological claim stated in the first line and we trace the materialization of the place-world through to the last line it is clear that the place-world that is constructed is fragmented. The narrative outlines Tayo's successful ceremony and geographic recovery yet the ceremony of the text-at-large is incomplete. Yes, the novel gains narrative cohesion by assuming a chronological linearity yet tracing the place-names reveal that the novel never acquires a geographic logic. In mapping the novel's structural geography we see that the larger "cultural" ceremony is incomplete despite the success of Tayo's ceremony. As the novel states at its close: the witchcraft "is dead for now" (Silko, *Ceremony* 243). This fact necessitates a new model of mapping, one which can understand the discrepancy between narrative reality and structural reality. Mapping the place-names in the text, in the next chapter, will expose the novel's failure to enact a geographic recovery.

In mapping the fragmented geography of the text-at-large it becomes apparent that the performativity of the text creates a space for ethical engagement. This engagement is contingent upon the ability of readers to comprehensively map and therefore reconstruct the novel's place-world. The novel's structural enactment of trauma requires the reader's responsibility to

reconstruct a linear and cohesive narrative. These responsibilities of ethical reading can be translated into ethical mapping, or the reconstruction of the novel's place-world through reading. As Freed explains the structural enactment of trauma in the novel she describes how this performativity modifies the role of readers. The formal enactment of trauma obligates the "reconstructive, often imaginative work of a reader or listener" (Freed 222), which I translate to the participatory reconstruction of the novel's fragmented place-world. Susan Berry Brill de Ramírez has framed the novel's performativity as placing the reader in an "active role that transcends the more bounded role of the textual reader" (13), therefore challenging the very act of reading. In creating a performative text, Silko leaves the reader with responsibility to engage in the text *ethically*.

We can conceptualize the space for ethical engagement that *Ceremony* creates through the lens of chronotopic narration. Mediating between the chronotopes in the text and the chronotopes in the real-world are the "*creative* chronotope[s]" that shape the exchange between the real world and the fictional world (Bakhtin 254). The act of narration is therefore chronotopic because "it occurs first and foremost in the historically developing social world, but without ever losing contact with changing historical space" (Ibid.). The creative chronotope enables a definition of the space for engagement that exists at the collision of life's actual space-time and novel's space-time. The creative chronotope "constitutes the distinctive life of the work" (255) manifested most explicitly in the performativity of trauma. Our engagement with the text exists in its own unique ecosystem, in a social world of discrete geographic space and historical time. Considering our relationship to the text enables us to reconceptualize the role of reading as well as how the subtextual geography indicates relevance. The novel's subtextual geography reflects

the reality of our postcolonial geography and the role of the fictionalized narrative is to model the current need for geographic reconstructive healing.

In reconstructing the novel's fragmented place-world we engage ethically with the text. In order to develop a model for ethical mapping, I will next turn to Moretti's model of "distant reading" to map places in a text. I want to invoke a question articulated by Freed: to what extent does "distant reading" actually *engage*—in an ethical sense—distant readers" (219)? I conclude that ultimately, while distant reading helps expose the trauma implicit in the subtextual geography, it cannot account for the role of the novel's fictionalized history. As the novel narrates Tayo's spiritual healing it claims that a traumatic history can be healed geographically. The novel's history models a healed possible place-world that must be read in relation to the novel's epistemologically-real fragmented place-world. Thus, in my final chapter, I will develop an alternative model of ethical mapping that brings the literary concepts and methods elaborated by Moretti and Bakhtin more in line with the concerns of Native American literary studies and the ethical and critical demands of Silko's novel.

Chapter Four: The Ethics of Distant Mapping

Writing in 1937, Bakhtin knew that “serious work on the study of space and time in art and literature ha[d] only just begun” (85). He calls for new theoretical contributions that “will in its further development eventually supplement, and perhaps substantially correct, the characteristics of novelistic chronotopes offered by us here” (Ibid.). Moretti’s work picks up where Bakhtin’s essay on the chronotope leaves off by introducing the notion of mapping, which is a complete decontextualization of place-names from the narrative. This interpretive strategy builds upon Bakhtin’s structural analysis, proposing a method for mapping the entirety of a novel’s place-names. Bakhtin’s concept of the chronotope illuminates how place-names construct a fragmented place-world in *Ceremony*. Moretti’s model suggests we can more fully understand this place-world as a narrative structure by completely removing the place-time elements from the narrative. Mapping the place-names makes legible the novel’s implied subtextual geography, an analysis which chronotopes only prefigure.

The chronotope models partial abstraction of spatial and temporal trajectories because they are analyzed within a narrative context. By contrast, what Moretti terms “distant reading” proposes complete abstraction and decontextualization of textual “data” from the literary narrative—that is, from the story itself.

What Moretti terms “distant reading” applies cartographic models to literary texts to search for new meaning that is *purely structural*. As a radical alternative to the tradition of close reading, distant reading focuses exclusively on visualizing the novel’s space-time framework that chronotopes mark. Distant reading forsakes the individual identity of locations for greater understanding of their relationship. It locates the places named in a narrative and then removes them completely from the narrative context, reproducing them in a list and then literal map.

Distant reading has been the source of significant controversy due to its rejection of close reading, the longstanding model of literary criticism, and corresponding ethical implications.³⁴

Within the context of Native American literature and Native traditions of place-naming, the ethical dilemma posed by distant reading is that this mapping completely ignores the stories associated with place and the fact that stories and place are intrinsically bound. Reading geography via structural analysis—whether Bakhtin’s narratology or Moretti’s mapping—disregards the novel’s fictionalized history and the dialectical mechanisms through which history informs geography. In other words, the places cannot be read without the stories associated with them.

Ultimately, I believe this rejection of history over geography does not align with the ethical obligations of place-naming in *Ceremony*. However, Moretti’s model enables the novel’s structural place-world to be considered at once in its entirety. Distance from the text, obtained through abstraction, is not an “obstacle” to meaning (as many close readers would advocate) but instead, as Moretti notes, “a specific form of knowledge” (*Graphs* 1). Moretti points out that leading studies of space and time in literature do not actually have maps and asks: “do maps *add* anything, to our knowledge of literature?” (35).³⁵ Maps, he argues, reveal information about a text that the narrative itself cannot because maps are themselves a form of knowledge. Within the “old territory” of literary criticism, maps are a “new object of study,” and the act of creating a literary map a mode of literary criticism (1).

Moretti’s maps are produced through complete abstraction of places from the text. In his words: distance is obtained when “you *reduce* the text to a few elements and *abstract* them from

³⁴ See Ascari’s *The Dangers of Distant Reading*, Khadem’s *Annexing the Unread*, and Love’s *Close But Not Deep* for criticisms of distant reading.

³⁵ Bakhtin, Dionisotti, Williams and Lafon are named.

the narrative flow” (*Graphs* 54). Contributing to the recent increase in scholarship within what is now called the “digital humanities,” Moretti uses what he terms “computational criticism” to map novels.³⁶ Moretti produces a distant map of novels by isolating a unit—for example recurring nouns such as “walks, lawsuits, luxury goods...” (53)—tracing its occurrences and then locating them in Cartesian space. The maps are constructed through units that become events, occurring in specific locations, and with a unique spatiotemporal relationship between them. Distant reading can be applied to any data set: genres, an author, a book, a chapter. Yet a limited number of units can be analyzed to construct a map. A book hypothetically has an unlimited number of possible maps, depending on which units are analyzed. The computational aspect of distant reading is critical if one seeks to analyze the data of entire genres or authors; however, more tailored analysis can be performed through relatively easy mapping. Moretti conceives of different models for distant reading: graphs, maps, and trees. Each of these different structures provides different ways of organizing data that become relevant to different types of units. Graphing is used to trace events over historical time, phylogenetic trees are used to trace evolutionary characteristics in genre and mapping is used to trace a novel’s geography.

Moretti acknowledges the sacrifices made in abstraction: “if we want to understand the system in its entirety, we must accept losing something. We always pay a price for theoretical knowledge: reality is infinitely rich; concepts are abstract, are poor” (*Distant* 49). This is echoed in Basso’s view of cultural barriers to understanding for the non-Native interpreter of Native cultures, given anthropology’s “abstraction” from the reality of lived experience. Within their tribal context, place-names allow a direct correlation between the physical geographic place and

³⁶ For a survey of digital humanities and its controversies see *Defining Digital Humanities: A Reader*.

its distillation as a word, they fully represent both site and story. The anthropological phenomenon of place-naming represents zero degrees of separation between place and name (or word). As a cultural “outsider” Basso acknowledges his distance from the complete meaning of place-names; once the places and stories are decontextualized and abstracted in analysis the “reality” of the tribal lived experience is lost. Similarly, Moretti acknowledges the “sacrifices” of distant reading, which focuses exclusively on structures to indicate the reality of the text, obviously compromising the reality of the lived experience that is the reference point for the narrative. Moretti is picking up the legacy of deconstructionism/ post-structuralism by problematizing the text’s “reality”—or the idea that the reality is legible *in the text* (*Graphs* 1). By subjecting text to a “process of deliberate reduction and abstraction” reality is instead manifest outside the text in “shapes, relations, structures” (Ibid.). In other words, Moretti’s approach to narrative subtextual geography argues that the “reality” of the text and its lived experience is manifest exclusively in structures.

In applying Moretti to Native American literature, I would like to reimagine his model in terms of the relationship between “lived experience” and theoretical “structures,” a framework borrowed from Frederic Jameson’s writing on “cognitive mapping.” In a classic essay, Jameson delineates the “dialectic” between lived experience and structure, “between a phenomenological description of the life of an individual and a more properly structural description of the conditions of existence of that experience” (278). In mapping *Ceremony*, whether or not we as readers are aware of it, we are similarly torn between a desire to discuss Tayo’s lived experience, told within his fictionalized history, and the subtextual geography that describes his experience structurally.

In Moretti's model, the product of distant reading, which takes the form of a physical map— will possess what he terms “emerging” qualities— qualities previously *unseen* because they were embedded within the novel (*Graphs* 54). As each place is removed from the narrative and the interconnectedness of places is exposed, the novel's maps “will be *more than the sum of their parts*” (Ibid.). Instead of viewing each place in its relation to the narrative and individual set of stories, *emerging qualities* are revealed by viewing the places within a map of the novel's place-world.

Moretti explains the type of meaning derived from distant reading via gestalt theory: a collection of variables is greater than the sum of its parts. For example: three points equidistant from each other are immediately perceived as a triangle, even if no lines have been drawn. Our mind draws the connections between points and gives relational meaning to discrete units. To expand the metaphor: an author can *implicitly* arrange the points in narrative to “form” a triangle even if they do not *explicitly* state that meaning. The author arranges units to form a narrative, and structural meaning can be derived from certain patterns of units. Using distant reading to map a novel's place-world therefore reveals a set of conditions that are only present structurally.

In Moretti's mapping, the geographic structure is contextualized within cultural ideology and actual cartography. Moretti's model culminates in a map of *ideology*, the abstract and theoretical map derived from lived experience in physical geography. As Moretti defines it, the map of the physical territory, “the material substratum” (*Graphs* 42), is the actual cartography of the places named. In *Ceremony* this is the geography of real sites that span from the Philippine Islands to California. Understanding the geographic location of these places and their relationship to each other is the function of the preliminary, “actual,” map. The map of ideology represents the author's constructed place-world, the map of the text. Mediating between these

two maps is the map of “*mentalité*,” or cultural practice—which is to say, in Moretti’s terms—“the omnipresent, half-submerged culture of daily routines... often intertwined with the performance of material labour” (Ibid.). In the Victorian novels through which Moretti elaborates his model, *mentalité* is, in essence, the land ethic of a community manifested through the performance of labour and movement across land. Because it occurs across geography, it can be read as a cultural cartography. In the case of *Ceremony*, this intermediary map is shaped by the tradition of place-naming. This map organizes the actual physical territory according to a cultural relationship to the landscape. The tradition of place-naming organizes places according to a specific cultural *mentalité* and therefore mediates between the physical geography of the actual world—the actual landscapes that are the novel’s setting—and the geography of constructed place-worlds—the “world” of the novel itself.

To clarify Moretti’s distinctions, which I am repurposing here: the text itself only exists as a map of *ideology* yet it must be contextualized via two other maps, which are actual (and not fictitious). The novel’s place-world references the reality of “actual” maps of physical and anthropological space. Although Moretti claims that the novel’s map must be contextualized within cultural and actual maps, his model disregards the treatment of geography within the narrative. Places are contextualized within anthropological conceptions of space yet remain decontextualized from the narrative. In this sense, distant reading becomes quite an intense investigation, as a novel can be seen to possess an infinite number of possible maps; however, not all maps generate critically relevant meaning.

In order to fully understand the mapping mechanisms of distant reading, it is useful to consider the case-study Moretti presents. He constructs a map of Mary Mitford’s *Our Village* (1824), an archetype of early nineteenth century British “village stories” which he contextualizes

with a reading of John Barrell's *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place 1730-1840* (1972), a historical study of Mitford's same cultural landscape. Using Barrell's 'system of geography' to contextualize Mitford's novel, Moretti presents a second map specific to the novel that he refers to as a map of *ideology*, edited through the author's intention. The novel's map reflects Barrell's *mentalité* with Mitford's particular subjectivity. This ideology represents the "world view of a different social actor," the author who mirrors the British land ethic yet transforms it into the "neat stylization of rural space" expressed by the novel (Moretti *Graphs* 42). The author of the text is a visitor within the referenced geography, an abstracted participant. The map of *mentalité* therefore cannot be reproduced exactly; the novel's map becomes a representation of the author's specific world-view who is "acting" or performing a different cartography. In referencing an implicit *mentalité* (and not adopting it), the author of the text "reverse[s] its symbolic associations," thereby enabling the locations themselves to have symbolic value within the constructed narrative (Ibid.).

Moretti's three maps represent three different levels of abstraction, increasing distance from the reality of lived experience, which culminates in what he calls "distant reading." First there exists the physical map of the territory, then the map of *mentalité*, a set of cultural practices associated with this territory, and then the novel-map that manifests the author's *ideology* as it relates to the cultural *mentalité*. Applying this model directly to *Ceremony* means that the novel's place-world would reference the map of Laguna place-names as well as the physical territory of New Mexico. The novel's map is dependent upon the structures of a cultural and physical map, and is constructed by referencing these cartographies. The place-names in the novel are dependent upon the physical lay of the land as well as the cultural conception of space, and with these two different types of knowledge they obtain their unique meaning and function.

As Moretti is not just interested in mapping novels, but developing a theory for mapping, he deems his project a study of “geometry” instead of “geography” (Moretti, *Graphs* 56) This distinction is very important because it foregrounds the centrality of structure in his analysis. Moretti deepens his definition of a map by referencing a geographical study by Claudio Cerretti entitled *Atlas of the European Novel* (1998) and a book on theoretical biology by D’Arcy Wentworth Thompson, *On Growth and Form* (1942). Taken together, these two sources enable Moretti to define his map as a “diagram of forces” (57), borrowing the term from Thompson. Cerretti’s study reveals to Moretti the difference between geometry and geography, and the fact that his cartographic study is a form of *geometry*. In the practice of cartography “locations *as such* did not seem that significant, if compared to the *relations* that the map had revealed among them” (54). The premise of Moretti’s mapping is not concerned with the identity of places in themselves but rather the relationships between places. Moretti paraphrases Cerretti in explaining that “for geography, locations as such *are* significant; geography is not just ‘extension’...but ‘intension’ too: ‘the *quality* of a given space’” (55). The difference between relations among locations and the identity of a location as such is such a meaningful distinction for Moretti that he completely adopts the premises of cartography as a form of geometry: “if I keep making diagrams, then, it is because for me *geometry* ‘*signifies*’ *more than geography*” (56). Here we can see how explicitly Moretti is forsaking the contextual identity of a place in favor of structural analysis. Moretti prioritizes the relational meaning of a place because he believes it to have greater representational power than the specific meaning of a place. Moretti turns to *On Growth and Form* to specify what types of meaning can be deduced via geometry. One of the central claims of Thompson’s book is that “the form of an object is a ‘diagram of forces’” and therefore we can “deduc[e] from the *form* of an object the *forces* that have been at work” (57). The

implications for this type of logic are incredible: the geometry or relational network can reveal the shaping internal characteristics. The map reveals forces that shaped it.

Distant reading proposes a model for mapping which, in reading geometry over geography, ignores the individual identity and narrative associated with a particular place in order to outline the structure of the entirety of a novel's place-world. The claim posited by Moretti is appealing because it acknowledges that the stories associated with place-names can never be understood in their entirety. However, I believe it locates the critic too far "outside" the realm of productive and ethical engagement with the text. Mapping the spatial and temporal expanses of the novel, as Bakhtin and Moretti advocate, elucidates the subtextual geography of the novel but by simply focusing on the name, ignores the story. Within the field of Native American literature, specifically, Moretti's "geometry" over geography is unethical. The cultural survival of Native peoples is dependent upon remembering the stories embedded in the landscape, as Tayo enacts in *Ceremony*. The narrative geography of the Laguna people cannot be analyzed without a detailed attention to the stories rooted in place. The place-name cannot be read as simply a name that is bound together with other names in a Cartesian grid. In order to accurately understand the function of geography within *Ceremony*, we must acknowledge the "location as such" (Moretti, *Graphs* 54) that Moretti is too eager to ignore.

A more ethical approach to distant reading of *Ceremony* still begins with an initial decontextualization of the place-names, following Moretti's instructions for "reduc[ing] the text to a few elements and abstract[ing] them from the narrative flow" (*Graphs* 54). Choosing the unit of place-names reveals 292 geographical proper nouns throughout the entire novel. This outline of the text's place-world can be read as postcolonial: the place-names range from the Laguna names of "Ka't'sina" and "Tse-pi'na" to the infamous sites of WWII battles "Iwo Jima"

and “Wake Island.” Viewing the novel’s place-world abstractly *shows* the forces of colonization and warfare as implicit structures within the geography. The fact that the novel is postcolonial means that reading the place-world exclusively in relation to Laguna place-names or the tribe’s geography is impossible. The tradition of place-naming is subverted by being applied to an entire expansive geography. The model of distant reading Moretti presents as being informed by culturally and geographically specific maps of physical territory and land ethic is not applicable. Given that all the place-names mentioned in the text are actual places in the real world, we can compare the novel’s distant map to that of physical territories yet a notion of “mentalité,” or land ethic must be reconsidered. The cultural cartography that informs the author’s spatial ideology is presented in *Ceremony* as fragmented and contested.

Distant reading can recognize the structural presence of trauma, it can reveal the forces of colonization present in the structural logic of place-names even though, as I am arguing, the novel is incomprehensible without acknowledging the stories attached to place and explicitly unbound from place. The map cannot be constructed without understanding the cultural and narrative conditions placed upon the novel’s place-world. If the novel’s narrative, or history, is considered alongside its geography then the function of geography within the novel becomes apparent. *The novel’s narrative claim is in opposition to the novel’s epistemological claim and therefore the function of geography is to model a possible world and to encourage ethical engagement.*

The narrative claim is that healing can occur through a geographic reconstruction of a fragile place-world. Tayo is able to recover the spiritual geography by confronting the places and stories of his trauma. The organization of place-names reveals, though, that Tayo’s process of healing does not correspond to a structural healing of geography. The place-world of the text

comprises an expanded geography that is never reconciled through localization, as the trajectory of Tayo's spiritual ceremony would claim. While Tayo learns to name the places of his trauma (Gallup, the Philippine jungles, Los Angeles, San Diego) and the places of his spiritual recovery (Cubero, Mount Taylor, Pa'to'ch, Jackpile Mine/ Trinity Site and Laguna) the narrative geographically moves to locate these places and identifies their stories. Tayo's trauma is materialized structurally within the text yet this place-world maintains its disorganization even after Tayo names Trinity Site as the point of convergence and symbolically defeats the so-called Destroyers. After Tayo completes the ceremony and returns home to Laguna, the text materializes the places Wake Island, Iwo Jima, Albuquerque, California, California and closes upon the name Laguna. The place-world of the text is still torn by the experience of war and trauma.

Harley and Leroy's bodies are found "in the big boulders below the road off Paguate Hill" yet "it was not much different than if they had died at Wake Island or Iwo Jima: the bodies were dismembered and the coffins were sealed" (Silko, *Ceremony* 240). These men, reduced to bodies, drift effortlessly back into the geography of war. In the end, the deaths of Harley and Leroy were "not much different" (Ibid.) than if they had died in the Pacific Theater. Emo escapes to California, never to return, after killing Pinkie. Although Tayo survives, his fellow veterans all succumb to tragic fates and never recover their spiritual landscape. Moreover, Harley and Leroy's bodies are materialized back in the Philippines and Emo's body far away in California. It is only Tayo who of his friends is located in Laguna at the novel's close. The naming of place does not model healing, it constructs a fragmented postcolonial place-world that never becomes grounded in place. This is even stated within the narrative as a continuation of the witchcraft. The narrative's cynical forecast is that the witchcraft "is dead for now" (243), implying only a

temporary defeat of the larger forces of evil. Additionally, within the context of the place-naming tradition, Tayo's grandmother occupies the last line of prose with a strikingly cynical observation: "it seems like I have heard these stories before...only thing is, the names sound different" (242).

Despite the forecast of witchcraft's return, the narrative's universal claim is that recovering the places and their stories generates healing as represented by Tayo's movement through the text's place-world. The novel's epistemological claim is that semiosis creates reality. As Tayo prays for an end to the jungle rain in the Philippines he brings a drought to Laguna solely through language. Tayo "wanted the words to make a cloudless blue sky, place with a summer sun pressing across wide and empty horizons" (Silko, *Ceremony* 11), the exact world he has inadvertently cursed upon the Laguna people: a sixth year of drought and barren landscapes. This model for semiosis is applied to the entire place-world of the novel, as evident from the novel's opening invocation of Thought-Woman who "named things and as she named them they appeared" (1). The novel's "epistemology" is predicated upon place-naming materializing a place-world, derived from the Native American conception of semiosis as constructing reality. The novel's epistemological claim is that the place-world of the text becomes real as it is named, yet the desired state of "materialized" healing does not occur. This fact challenges us to reconsider the conditions placed upon the naming of place and the mode of ethical engagement.

Catherine Rainwater describes the novel's epistemological complexity through the construction of an alternative space of dwelling. As she sees it: "if 'story' precedes reality, perhaps American Indian writers may begin through semiosis to reconstruct and reinhabit their home" (Rainwater 119). Rainwater reads the "crisis of dwelling" as the "structural dynamic" (Ibid.) of *Ceremony*, created through "oppositional logonomic systems, contradictory

codifications of space, and other semiotic features” (133). Rainwater acknowledges that the “episteme” (132), or truth of the novel is its fundamental instability yet she believes that Silko “provides her readers with a metatextual set of instructions for participating in the re-creation of the world through storytelling” (129). These instructions within the context of place-naming were given by the healer Betonie, who outlined for Tayo a map of geographic recovery that would generate spiritual recovery.

The novel’s place-world becomes real as it is named. It is the performativity of the novel that enables the reader to reconstruct the geography of the place-world. As Rainwater observes, “Silko encodes a crisis of dwelling designed to assist the reader in creating a new map through a new, alternative story” (133). The narrative models the process of geographic recovery and healing yet the text structurally necessitates ethical engagement. As we reconstruct the novel’s place-world and trace Tayo’s healing geographically “implied readers have insight into how the Destroyers work in the world around them. They are given the perception to prepare them for future action and to initiate appropriate ceremonial responses” (Chavkin 184). By ethically reconstructing the place-world we can participate in the mutual act of restoring stories to landscapes. Silko presents us with “an approach to narrating the traumatic past that balances identification and accountability in the context of a global readership” (Freed 238). By enabling reader’s participation in the place-world of the text, the trauma presented in *Ceremony* is mitigated by equally performative actions such as identification and accountability.

In order to explore the conditions of ethical engagement in the text, we can first consider what an ethical mapping of place-names looks like. We need a new model for mapping the novel that can allow for its place-world to be geographically complex, structurally complex and conceptually complex. Instead of interpreting the novel’s place-world through a two-dimensional

and horizontal map, we must allow the map to be “vertical” and “metaphysical,” to interpolate spaces of “dwelling” (Rainwater 119) within the geography; *we must map the stories alongside the places*. Reading the stories bound with the places allows for the novel’s spiritual claim to coexist with the novel’s epistemological claim, for the dialectical relationship between the novel’s fictionalized history and subtextual geography to be maintained. The material reality generated by “distant reading” is of a fragmented place-world, yet reading Tayo’s stories enables us to consider possibilities for real healing that could be enacted geographically.

Viewing the structure without stories ignores the claims of traumatic narration as necessitating ethical engagement. As Karen Piper writes, with reference to literary criticism of *Ceremony*, “reading stories as maps, however, becomes problematic when Laguna Indians are disenfranchised from their own territory” (487). The goal of an ethical mapping of the novel is therefore to allow the places to speak their stories while still tracing the structure. Distant reading can *show* that the map is postcolonial and that the land is contested yet it does not on its own consider possibilities for healing through the geographic reconstruction of reading (as mapping). The conflict between the novel’s narrative claim and epistemological claim can be translated to the dialectic between the novel’s possible world and the novel’s materialized world.

Moretti quotes the biologist Peter Medawar who poetically remarked that scientific research “begins as a story about a Possible World...and ends by being, as nearly as we can make it, a story about real life.” (Medawar in Moretti, *Distant* 54) In the final chapter I would like to invoke new methods for mapping textual space that allow for ethical engagement, namely David Harvey’s “historical-geographical materialism” (96). I would like to unpack the conditions of the novel’s “possible world” versus the novel’s epistemologically “real” and materialized place-world. Resolving these alternative realities also requires reconsidering the relationship

between lived experience and structures not as oppositional, but instead intrinsically related and readable as such.

Conclusion: A Possible Place-World

Being critically located outside the Native culture necessitates a model for “ethical engagement” with the text (McKegney 63). I began this thesis by invoking poet and feminist theorist Adrienne Rich’s call to “understand how a place on the map is also a place in history” (30). I want to return to this point of departure as a vantage from which to criticize the potential ethical pitfalls of distant reading, the interpretive model elaborated by Moretti, as an approach to Native American literature. Distant reading separates place-names from their stories and prioritizes narrative structures *over* the depicted lived experience they frame. Rich would seem to anticipate the ethical predicament of distant reading when she writes against “lofty and privileged abstraction” (213). “Theory,” she writes,

the seeing of patterns, showing the forest as well as the trees—theory can be a dew that rises from the earth and collects in the rain cloud and returns to earth over and over. But if it doesn’t smell of the earth, it isn’t good for the earth (Ibid.)

Distant reading celebrates precisely the type of lofty abstraction that soars above the trees to find the forest’s pattern.

Queer theorist Heather Love similarly describes how distant reading “turns away from the intimacy of ethical pedagogy” (374); however, Love notes, it also presents an opportunity for meaningful interdisciplinary exchange with fields such as sociology, economics and critically, geography. Love writes that Moretti rejects “the singularity and richness of individual texts” which constitutes a “concomitant refusal of the ethical charisma of the literary translator or messenger” (5). By turning place-names into data and mapping novels without considering the narrative, Moretti misses the unique function of geography within a novel such as *Ceremony* and the ethical critical engagement it necessitates. In rejecting the humanism of literary studies,

Moretti fails to acknowledge the ethics of reconstructing literary geography. Moretti fails to acknowledge the lived experience of trauma encoded in the geographic structure he analyzes.

Distant mapping refuses to consider the physical conditions of place; of not being able to name it, of not being able to exist there, of not knowing its story. Especially when mapping places through text, the fact that stories are associated with place becomes an ethical concern. Joanne Lipson Freed explains that the embodied trauma of the text requires “reconstructive” and “imaginative” (222) reading. I would like to explore the conditions of ethical engagement placed upon the reader first by examining these two different types of engagement that must be performed. The reconstructive work is predicated upon a “hybridist” stance in relation to Native American literary ethics. Thus, *Ceremony*’s place-world merges both Native and non-Native geographies and requires reconstructive reading as a *hybrid act* to generate meaning. What Freed describes as imaginative work is predicated upon the construction of a possible world, by which a text like *Ceremony* can produce actual healing.

Silko was famously criticized by the Laguna Pueblo poet and literary scholar Paula Gunn Allen who chastised Silko’s use of embedded text because “to use the oral tradition directly is to run afoul of native ethics” (84). Opening up these stories to a non-Native audience as well as presenting them within “a structure modeled on disorder,” Gunn Allen claimed, is to “us[e] the tradition while contravening it[:] to do violence to it.” (Ibid.) Gunn Allen rejects Silko’s structural depiction of the actual fragmentation of Native American history and geography because she reads it as violent and unethical.

The conflicting ideologies of Silko and Gunn Allen epitomize “hybridist” versus “nativist” positions, the most important debate in Native American critical theory.³⁷ The nativist

³⁷ See Appleford’s *Response* for a summary of views.

position is summarized by Gunn Allen as “preserving tradition” (85) by resisting the literary misuse of Native American traditions. Concluding her critique of Silko, in an essay titled, “Special Problems in Teaching Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Ceremony*,” Gunn Allen confesses to an ethical dilemma between feeling an ethical obligation to educate, as a professor, and an ethical obligation as an Indian to safeguard spiritual geography and language.

Critics such as Sam McKegney and Rob Appleford read these opposed positions as a conflict of engagement versus disengagement with a native text. Engagement entails the critical study of Native American literature and contribution to dialogue surrounding it by non-Native critics, while disengagement restricts or rejects their participation. Ethical engagement is aligned with a “hybridist” perspective. This position holds that we must acknowledge the “interdependence of Indigenous and colonial history, a shared trajectory” as the text’s “reality” in order to combat disengagement and reinforcing cultural marginalization (Appleford 60). I believe, as does Silko, that the “reality” of postcolonial history and geography is a tragic hybridization of Native and non-Native histories and geographies and in order to heal we must engage in mutual reconstruction. McKegney sees the ethical critic as an “ally,” one who acknowledges the limits of their understanding yet takes on the responsibility of active participation. Appleford supports the premise of ethical engagement, yet specifically desires to probe what Muskogee Creek writer and scholar Craig Womac calls “the ethics of the relationship between a text and the community it claims to represent” (Womac in Appleford 59). Appleford’s concern is that ethical criticism believes that Native authors stand for a “community” with specific political projects and therefore confuses two senses of representation, political representation and aesthetic re-presentation.

Although Appleford does not delineate a specific mode of ethical engagement, his call to re-evaluate the relationship between the text and what it claims to represent is significant. Responding to Appleford's concern that politicized criticism is not always warranted, I believe forms of hybrid mapping, can offer alternatives. Letting the data speak for itself, we should mine texts for *implicit* rather than explicit political agendas. It is clear within *Ceremony* that the novel manifests the politics of location as a structurally fragmented history and geography. This idea, as elaborated in the previous chapters, allows us to undertake ethical engagement.

The reconstructive reading becomes a hybrid act because the trauma and recovery are not located exclusively within a Native history and geography. Silko depicts a postcolonial landscape and additionally, as I argued in the first chapter, depicts healing that can only occur with an acknowledgment of this expansive geography. Understanding the trauma and model for recovery requires mapping places and stories that are non-Native but that have fundamentally altered Native places and stories. In *Ceremony*, sites such as Iwo Jima, Wake Island, Omaha Beach and others are explicit markers of trauma. These sites have had a tangible, that is to say devastatingly material, impact upon the history and geography of the Native landscape. Not only have they generated physical bodily trauma brought back to the reservation by veterans, they are inextricably linked to the physical trauma upon Native land evident in Trinity Site, Jackpile Mine and White Sands. As Silko writes, the "witchcraft" present in the violence of colonization and warfare "knew no boundaries" (*Ceremony* 228). Therefore the stories attached to these places can only be understood within a "hybridist" universe that conceives of the painful interconnectedness of histories and geographies. Sites such as Pa'to'ch and Tse-pi'na (Mount Taylor) are materialized as markers of recovery and their spiritual stories have been opened up to non-Natives in order to model possible healing for Native Americans. The novel's place-world

and associated stories therefore represent a hybridist reality in which both Natives and non-Natives must understand the geography and history in order to generate healing. *Ceremony* structurally manifests this problematized world-making as embodied trauma in order to obligate ethical readership according to the model of healing Silko presents in the narrative.

Reconstructive engagement must be hybridist because the “reality” of the text is materialized through both Native and non-Native places and only comprehensible with an understanding of their respective stories. Silko opens up the text to cross-cultural participation and mutual reconstruction.

As described by Freed, the imaginative dimension of ethical engagement with Native American literature recognizes the critical import of possible worlds within the field of Native American literature because “the reconstruction of places can visualize a different set of futures” (61). We can view Tayo’s geographic recovery as modeling a possible-world that has the power to impinge on the materially real place-world of the text. By generating a “possible world,” literature models states of social interaction that cannot exist in the real world, which is in this case is reflected in the subtextually “real” and materialized world of the text. Within *Ceremony*, Silko maps a possible place-world within the constellation of sites Cubero, Mount Taylor, the Pa’to’ch Butte, Jackpile Mine and Laguna. Silko presents a model for learning stories associated with places in order to recover the geography as a possible form of healing. *Reading the narrative presents us with a fictionalized history that readers can use to recover the geography of the text-at-large*. We can read Tayo’s trauma embodied within the structural geography of the novel and recognize a need for textual healing.

As explained by Marie Laure-Ryan, the theory of “possible worlds” in literature accomplishes two critical tasks: it allows the qualities of a “world” to be projected onto text as

well as introduces the notion of modalities to describe the different objects, states, and events within the text's domain. Earlier I explained the mechanisms through which text could be read as a place-world by naming places as markers of a textual geography. *Ceremony* additionally incorporates "modalities," or states of reality, of this place-world that exist simultaneously within the text's domain: the possible world of Tayo's spiritual recovery and the actual world of the novel's geography. Laure-Ryan proposes that the actual world and fiction's possible world can be divided semantically based upon their accessibility. The *real world* is the "actually existing state of affairs" (Laure-Ryan 20) while the *possible world* is an accessible yet not currently existing state of affairs. Literature's possible worlds can be apprehended via critic David Harvey's critical method of "historical-geographical materialism" (6).

Harvey delineates the fundamental tenets of "historical-geographical materialism" as follows. First, "mapping space" as a discursive activity is a prerequisite to the structuring of knowledge and therefore "talk about 'situatedness,' 'location' and 'positionality' is meaningless without a mapping of the space in which those situation, locations and positions occur" (Harvey 112). I understand this as the need for geographic contextualization because using the term location is meaningless without a clear environment. Context informs the location and its conditions. All the place-names within *Ceremony* constitute a place-world and it is only in understanding the place-world in its entirety that the condition of "place" is understood. Second, mapping incorporates power; the ability to map as well as how the space is mapped is a struggle over power; "power struggles over mapping are fundamental moments in the production of discourse" (Ibid.), regardless of whether the territory is real or metaphorical. Within a consideration of cartography, or even geography, it is critical to realize that space and place are always manipulated by the social groups that hold power over population that they marginalize.

Cultures and groups in power change the names of places and their stories as well as draw lines on the map. The geography of Silko's discourse within *Ceremony* is predicated upon a desire to reveal the impact of colonization upon the geography of the Laguna people, through using place-names as markers of trauma and recovery. Third, social relations are always spatial and the production of spatial relations is a product of social relations that functions dialectically. Tayo's trauma and recovery can only be understood within the culture of spiritual embeddedness in the landscape. Fifth, institutions are produced spaces in the sense that they control territory as well as organize symbolic space. Because geography is informed by power, landscapes are institutionalized. Last, and perhaps most relevant to this project, is the fact that "the imaginary (thoughts, fantasies, and desires) is a fertile source of all sorts of possible spatial worlds that can prefigure—albeit incoherently—all manner of different discourses, power relations, social relations, institutional structures, and material practices. The imaginary of spatiality is of crucial significance in the search for alternative mappings of the social process and of its outcomes" (Ibid.).

Harvey explains that fundamental to Marxist dialectical thinking is a belief in and exploration of "possible worlds" (56); this mode of thinking allows the potential for change, self-realization, the construction of new collective identities, new social ecosystems. Although Harvey is committed to the difficult task of rendering these possible worlds within the actual world using social theory, Raymond Williams resorted to fiction and literary theory in order to explore possible-worlds in all their complexity. According to Harvey, "Williams did not or could not put this mode of thought in confronting issues of place, spatio-temporality, and the environment directly in his cultural theory" (47) and instead turned to the novel as a form for expressing these concerns. Harvey appreciates this turn, which specifically allowed tensions to

be perpetually open as a “primary resource for the creative thinking and strategies necessary to achieve progressive social change” (38). Harvey explains that “the search for *possibilities* was, of course, always central to Williams’ work” (57), possibilities embedded within the set of social practices. The work of fiction is to maintain a set of futures perpetually available.

The world I am searching for in *Ceremony* is exactly this, an “imaginary of spatiality,” both of spatial relations within the text and a method for prefiguring the relationship between text and space. In this imaginary different discourses, power relations, social relations, institutional structures and material practices are re-envisioned to model healing. This imaginary exists as “possible spatial worlds” within the narratives that re-imagine the function of geography and history as well as forms of interaction with text. The imaginary allows us to conceive of modes of ethical engagement in which readers reconstruct different forms of spatiality (both possible and material). The critical importance of this model is that it embodies physical trauma and asks the reader to make healing “actual.” Bill Ashcroft wrote that: “political and social change can only occur because they occur in the minds of those who imagine a different kind of world” (Ashcroft in Brooks xxxix) and therefore the challenge posed by the difficult reading of *Ceremony* is to *make the possible world actual*. We return to the dialectic of place-names: stories construct place and geography within the book and likewise geography can reconstruct the story and therefore reality, as modeled through Tayo’s recovery. The question then becomes, can the imaginary actually impinge upon materiality?

Due to the Native American epistemology that equates language with world-making, a materialized place-world is constructed structurally while the narrative constructs a possible world. The geographic performativity in *Ceremony* enables it to have a “real” world that *co-exists* with the possible world within the text. The possible world is constructed through the

narrative discourse of fiction, through the narrator's presentation of events. The possible world is therefore not related to the subtextual structure, which is presented by the author as what I define as the subtextually real world. The possible world of the narrative is in opposition to this "real world. Laure-Ryan explains that as we read the narrative, for "the duration of our immersion in a work of fiction, the realm of possibilities is thus recentered around the sphere which the narrator presents as the actual world. This recentering pushes the reader into a new system of actuality and possibility" (22). The fictional universe is presented by the narrative as "actual," which requires the ontological "recentering" Laure-Ryan mentions. Given the recentering of "reality" that fiction presents, the reader believes Tayo's healing is "actual". Yet via forms of critical mapping, we can see another system of reality at play: the novel's subtextual geography materialized through place-naming.

Laure-Ryan describes the "presence of an actual world in the universe of fictional texts, and the presence of possible worlds in the universe of nonfictional ones" (24), which confounds any attempt to generalize the state of one possible-world within fictional texts and one actual world within non-fictional texts. Instead, there is a "plurality of systems of reality" that makes it possible "to use the notions of actual and possible world in the characterization of fiction" (Ibid.). Given explicit references to actual geographies—every single place-name is actual—and histories within the novel—most notably histories of WWII—it is clear that significant portions of the novel's world are based in the actual world. Laure-Ryan clarifies three distinct actual worlds at play within a work of fiction: the actual world in which the author and reader are located, the textual universe that is the sum of all the worlds (both actual and possible) projected by the text, and at the center of the textual universe is the textual actual world. The textual actual world references the textual reference world (from which the narrator speaks) yet Laure-Ryan

outlines a condition in which the textual actual world may be “incompatible” with the textual reference world, the “world it is supposed to represent” (25).³⁸ Native American epistemology and the textual “materiality” of place-names I have been describing confound Laure-Ryan’s schema. The textual reference world is defined as the world from which the narrator speaks and therefore could be considered the place-world of materialized names, all existing within “her room” (Silko, *Ceremony* 1). The textual reference world, the place-world that is materialized, is “incompatible” with the textual actual world because the state of affairs within the textual actual world of geographic healing are not mimicked in the textual reference world it is supposed to represent. Laure-Ryan’s model allows this fact to exist, because of the multiplicity of worlds, actual and possible, which can coexist within a work of fiction.

The principal narrative of Tayo’s recovery can be characterized as “world-creating” because it does not focus on the “center of the speaker’s system of reality” (Laure-Ryan 29), which I have defined as the textual reference world that can be materialized. Speaking generally, Tayo’s geographic recovery is not materialized and therefore his experiences exist “on a world at the periphery,” a possible world.³⁹ Given the complexity of world-making in the novel I would like to focus solely on the relationship between the possible world and the materialized world.

At the periphery of the “fictionalized system of reality” (Laure-Ryan 31) presented by the Thought-Woman, there exists Tayo’s geographic recovery, which models a possible world. This raises a distinction between the system of reality presented by the Thought-Woman as

³⁸ In this thesis I characterize the textual universe as the novel’s place world, the textual actual world as the possible place-world, and the textual reference world as the materialized (or textually real) place-world.

³⁹ One could analyze the specific chronological leaps in “possibility” and “actuality” that novels such as *Ceremony* continuously enact via the recentering of reality. As Laure-Ryan describes it: “once the leap to a new system has been taken, the same repertory of moves become recursively available” (29).

materialized and Tayo's geographic recovery as *fictionalized*. The materialized world and the possible world are connected through the standard of accessibility. If a narrative world within a work of fiction is completely inaccessible to the reader it is not believable as a world, not legible as possible. These works are characterized as having either an "empty center," an "unknowable center" or a "radical lack of authority" (40). I believe that Tayo's place-world holds none of those qualities and instead can be placed on the spectrum of accessibility. To say that the set of conditions placed upon Tayo's geography within *Ceremony* are accessible is to provide the novel with a relevant function. The novel presents a possible state of affairs within the narrative in which historical and geographical recovery is *accessible* and this recovery is correlated to the concept of healing.

In order to understand how we can endorse both systems of reality, the possible and the actual, it is necessary to recognize the relationship between the novel's possible world and materialized world. Both are predicated upon a desire to speak about the trauma of lived experience. Abenaki scholar Lisa Brooks advocates for reading and mapping the "historical space" (39) alluded to by text.⁴⁰ Ultimately, the mapping of a novel can reveal the conditions of lived experience via structures. Brooks's critical model of an "interactive text-map," considered alongside Harvey's "historical-geographical materialism" enables mapping of the text to translate to mapping of actual space with lived history and embodied geography. In order to support some of the structural analyses of *Ceremony*'s place-world that I have undertaken, I would like to invoke David Harvey's method of "historical-geographical materialism." Within

⁴⁰ Brooks's "interactive text-map" (42) analyzes actual historical space, while I am interested in using the same model of "historical-geographical materialism" (Harvey 6) to map fictional space, albeit that references real histories and geographies.

this framework, Harvey presents a clear argument for reading the place-world of a text by “reconstruct[ing] theory with space” (9).

A model for ethical mapping recognizes that structures are intimately bound with lived experience. They both indicate and shape lived experience. Pushing theory to “smell of the earth” means finding models of literary mapping that acknowledge the physical condition of land. The struggle I want to engage in is to keep theory grounded in the physical conditions its objects address. This means acknowledging that, in the U.S. context, a place on the map is a place within a historical battle for physical land; a place on a map locates the geography of colonizers that named all land theirs as well as the absence of the Native American geography that was systematically destroyed. Colonization re-named places and erased their stories. As Silko writes in *Ceremony*, all the “names...were buried under English words” (64), so how can we read the place-names in the novel? *It is necessary to read the novel in a manner that allows for the reality of postcolonial geography to become the “reality” of the text while also modeling alternatives for healing.* The novel’s fragmented place-world mimics the *actual* conditions of Native American history and geography. As Rainwater notes, Silko “attempts to resolve in textual space what cannot be resolved in geographic space” (119): she models a healing within the narrative that does not currently exist in the actual (and, by extension, subtextual) geography.

Place-names simultaneously generate two realities in *Ceremony*: an epistemological reality reflective of actual reality and a narrative reality that models a possible state of affairs. Endorsing the fictionalized history of the text means conceiving of a history that can be molded by geography. This fact, in tension with the geography of the text-at-large, constitutes the “metatextual set of instructions” (Rainwater 128). The challenge bestowed upon readers is to envision *real* geographic recovery because, as Rainwater states, in the novel “reality is a direct

result of the versions of the world that we reconstruct” (Ibid.). The novel’s materialized world embodies geographically the conditions of our real world in terms of physical loss of territory and trauma. This fact has allowed critics to envision the novel as a ceremony-at-large, modelling through Tayo’s experiences a larger cultural healing. By re-envisioning Tayo’s geographic recovery we can choose to endorse the novel’s possible world and allow it to impinge upon the real world.

A model for ethical mapping “helps us to engage with, understand and then act upon history” (Smith 34). As we read places such as Iwo Jima, Gallup, Dixie Tavern, Laguna, Mount Taylor, and Trinity Site we learn their history through the associated stories. These places are materialized through language and become “real.” The act of reading, and engaging ethically, means participating in the “reconstruction of places” which, as stated by Lisa Brooks, “can visualize a different set of futures” (61). Ethical critical engagement reveals how “place” depicts the lived experience of geography and history. Ethical mapping is fundamentally predicated upon understanding how to read lived experience within structures. David Harvey’s scholarship on “historical-geographical materialism” advocates a mode of mapping predicated upon a relational view of lived experience versus the structures that describe it.

Harvey talks about the recent obsession with “cognitive maps” (4) in fields of art, politics, literary and social theory. His argument is that the methodology surrounding these practices is “typically totalizing, usually two-dimensional, Cartesian, and very undialectical” (Ibid.). These are all qualities distant reading can be found guilty of, in its assumption that meaning can be derived exclusively from structure without contextualization or hybrid reading. Cognitive mapping strategies ignore what Harvey terms “the problematics of representation” (5) by assuming that the structure can accurately represent the multifaceted, dialectical qualities of

space. According to Harvey an ethical mapping begins by considering first and foremost the multidimensionality of “place, space and environment” (44) and reading this trifecta into textual representation. This shift in attention enables the spatial world of the text to be complex, incorporating lived experience through the stories. Attempting to understand the function of geography within the text exclusively through distant mapping only visualizes what has been materially constructed yet the geography works on a three-dimensional level, providing a space of dwelling and lived experience. *An ethical mapping strategy exposes both the structures and lived experience of geography and reads them as fundamentally interconnected.*

As Harvey writes, “the constitution of place cannot be abstracted from the shifting patterns of space relations” (30). In relation to the Native American social world of place-naming, not only is the landscape fundamentally dialectical, alive with stories continually shaping the lives of its inhabitants, the stories and places themselves are in a state of flux because they are changing and being lost within a postcolonial environment. In order to record this complex state of place, space and environment within the Laguna Pueblo tribe, it is necessary to begin with the stories of history as lives. Recognizing the stories told alongside the geographies mapped allows historical trauma to be read differently; theory can “smell of the earth.”

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