



INSTITUTIONEN FÖR
SPRÅK OCH LITTERATURER

"I'LL SPEAK FOR BOTH SIDES":

Coloniality and Hybridity in Identity Construction in
Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*

Filippa Kakavand

Essay/Degree Project:	15 hp
Program or/and course:	EN1311
Level:	First cycle
Term/year:	VT/2023
Supervisor:	Joe Kennedy
Examiner:	Marius Hentea
Report nr:	xx

Abstract

Title: *"I'll speak for both sides": Coloniality & Hybridity in Identity Construction in Leslie Marmon Silko's Ceremony*

Author: Filippa Kakavand

Supervisor: Joe Kennedy

Abstract: This study explores the complex relations between coloniality and hybridity in identity construction for the Native American community in Leslie Marmon Silko's novel *Ceremony*. The study aims to examine how these literary techniques contribute to the protagonist's construction of identity, specifically focusing on his mixed-race identity and the way in which coloniality influences his experience. Through close reading, the study explores instances of hybridity and magical realism in the novel, examining their role in challenging societal norms, resisting colonial power structures, and disrupting dominant narratives. The findings signify the significance of hybridity as a form of resistance against coloniality in identity construction. With the incorporation of magical realism, Silko creates a "third space" of negotiation, allowing for a blurring of the lines and new identity constructions. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of Native American experiences and identities by addressing colonialism's impact on the community and identity construction.

Keywords: Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony*, postcolonialism, coloniality, hybridity, magical realism, identity, storytelling, Indigenous, Native American literature

Table of content

1. Introduction	1
2. Theory & Method	3
2.1 <i>Coloniality</i>	3
2.2 <i>Hybridity</i>	4
3. Coloniality & Identity Construction	7
3.1 <i>Language & Storytelling</i>	7
3.2 <i>Western Epistemology & Indigenous Knowledge</i>	11
4. Hybridity & Resistance	14
4.1 <i>Hybridity as Resistance against Coloniality</i>	14
4.2 <i>The Role of Magical Realism in Representing Hybridity and Resistance</i>	16
5. Conclusion.....	19
6. References	21

1. Introduction

Regarded as an important work of Native American literature, Leslie Marmon Silko's novel *Ceremony* has remained popular in Native and contemporary literary studies alike (Ruppert 175). Silko, a Laguna Pueblo writer of mixed heritage, incorporates her own cultural experiences and knowledge into her work, offering a unique viewpoint on the intricacies of Native American identity and the ongoing repercussions of colonialization. By drawing on her personal connection to the Laguna Pueblo community and her experiences growing up, she crafts a story about the quest for identity, cultural negotiation, and the recovery of Native American traditions.

One of the main themes in *Ceremony* is the search for one's identity. The mixed-race main character Tayo, being half Laguna Pueblo and half white, goes through a journey of self-discovery to understand and ultimately accept his mixed identity. Returning home from WWII to the Laguna Pueblo reservation with PTSD, Tayo struggles to find his place in a world marked by cultural disconnect and the lingering effects of colonialism. Through the blending of traditional Native American ceremonies, Tayo begins a journey for healing and understanding his identity.

The issue of confusion surrounding mixed identities is a highly relevant topic in today's globalized world. Thus, the work of prominent scholars in postcolonial studies, such as Homi Bhabha (hybridity) and Walter D. Mignolo (coloniality), provides valuable insight into the complexity of identity construction in a postcolonial world. However, in the case of *Ceremony*, not many studies have focused on the cause and effect between hybridity and coloniality. While there has been some research regarding identity (see Qi; Rice; Ruppert; Owens) and Western epistemology (See Hobbs) in *Ceremony*, none has focused explicitly on coloniality's effect on hybridity. Therefore, in my research paper, I will investigate how the relationship between the colonizer and colonized impacts Tayo's identity and pushes him to re-evaluate his hybridity.

The topic of cultural identity and colonialism is a common and essential subject in postcolonial studies. As previously mentioned, *Ceremony* deals with the issue of finding one's identity. Consequently, there are some existing studies on the subject in critical readings of *Ceremony*. However, despite its importance as a central theme in the novel and its importance in Native American literature studies, relatively few studies delve into the intricacies of identity formation. The two more extensive papers on the subject, "No Boundaries, Only Transitions: 'Ceremony'" by James Ruppert and "Witchery, Indigenous Resistance, and Urban Space in

Leslie Marmon Silko's 'Ceremony'" by David A Rice, provide valuable insight into Tayo's transformative journey and the profound impact of these experiences on his journey. Furthermore, the literature addressing Western epistemology in the novel is mainly addressed by Michael Hobbs in his article "Living In-Between: Tayo as Radical Reader in Leslie Marmon Silko's 'Ceremony.'" While Hobbs focuses on the disparity between Native American knowledge and Western epistemology, there remains a gap in the research that I intend to address. To summarize, existing research has mainly focused on either identity formation or colonial epistemology. While valuable insight has been provided on identity formation, there is a need to further explore the complexities of identity confusion in a postcolonial society. To address this gap, I aim to expand on the current research by examining the intricate aspects of identity construction in a postcolonial society. By using the concepts of hybridity and coloniality, I will highlight the cause-and-effect these two concepts have on each other and their impact on identity formation.

To build upon previous research, this study intends to shed light on the complex dynamics between the colonizer and the colonized in postcolonial societies by investigating how coloniality affects Tayo's sense of self and the function of hybridity as a form of resistance. How does coloniality impact the Pueblo people, and how can it contribute to the negotiation and development of hybrid identities? How is hybridity represented in the novel, and how is it used as a form of resistance? To answer these questions, I will look at Tayo's journey of self-discovery and juxtapose it against the colonial matrix of power prevalent in the society in which he lives. In doing this, coloniality's impact on the identity of a colonized group will become evident.

I have structured the essay into two main chapters. The first chapter will examine coloniality and identity construction, where I will discuss the impact of coloniality on the Pueblo people while focusing on language and knowledge. The second chapter will focus on hybridity and resistance as a response to coloniality. This chapter will explore the prevalence of hybridity and magical realism's role in its use as a form of resistance against power structures.

2. Theory & Method

As the issue of cultural identity in a globalized world has always been my main area of interest in literary studies, I want to examine the writings of the subaltern to gain a better understanding of the ways in which marginalized communities have been constructed in literature. The representation can then highlight the dominant narratives and challenge them by shedding light on the different perspectives and experiences of those who have been historically silenced or oppressed. This, then, can help the understanding of constructions of cultural identity in our multicultural world. To achieve this, two concepts from postcolonial theory will be central to my work. Firstly, Walter Mignolo's definition of the concept of *coloniality* as he describes it in his article "Delinking: The Rhetoric of Modernity, the Logic of Coloniality and the Grammar of De-Coloniality," which will help to examine in what ways colonialism has shaped Indigenous experiences and identities. Secondly, I will use Homi Bhabha's concept of *hybridity* as defined in *The Location of Culture* to analyze how new cultural forms are created through how the characters negotiate conflicting cultural influences. These two concepts will help show the correlation between coloniality and identity and the role of hybridity in a postcolonial society. In this section, these theoretical concepts will be explained further to provide a framework for my analysis of the novel.

2.1 Coloniality

Mignolo writes about the ongoing effects of colonialism and the need for delinking from the power structures it has created. The concept of the *colonial matrix of power*, first introduced by the Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano in the 1980s, refers to the unconscious power structure prevalent in modern society that was established as a result of Western colonialism (Mignolo 450-451). It was a concept that was developed to shed light on the enduring presence of colonial patterns of power structures that continue to shape contemporary society, even in the absence of obvious colonialism. According to Mignolo, it is characterized by a set of power relations that work to subordinate and control the colonized group through power (economic and political), being (gender, sexuality, etc.), and knowledge (451). These links of power, which shape how we perceive and understand the world, can persist as the lack of visible colonialism allow for deniability and for it to continue unhindered. In response to this, *decoloniality* is proposed as a way to delink from this power structure, leading to a “de-colonial epistemic shift”

which “brings to the foreground other epistemologies, other principles of knowledge and understanding and, consequently, other economy, other politics, other ethics” (Mignolo 453). Decoloniality, then, is necessary to challenge the ongoing effects of colonialism and coloniality, which are established through the colonial matrix of power.

In Native American literary studies, unsurprisingly, the effect of colonialism is omnipresent as it has had a profound impact on Indigenous communities and their literary traditions. Its effect is multifaceted and complex, touching on various issues such as land dispossession, forced assimilation, cultural erasure, and genocide (Shackleton 69). As a result, coloniality studies are essential to offer a unique perspective on colonialism and imperialism's historical and ongoing impact on Indigenous people and their culture. One such example would be the use of the written form (in English), which can be seen as an effect of colonialism and the imposition of European systems of knowledge and communication on Indigenous people, who, prior to this, had a rich oral storytelling culture (Forbes). Native American literature serves as a crucial site for the decolonization of knowledge, providing a platform for Indigenous voices to challenge dominant discourses and assert their epistemologies, as well as their cultural identity and sovereignty (Allen 220). Therefore, in this thesis, I intend to use the concept of coloniality to highlight the unequal relationship between the colonized/colonizer and its impact on the Native American community's sense of self, as exemplified in the mixed-race protagonist Tayo's struggle in *Ceremony*.

2.2 Hybridity

Bhabha's concept of hybridity refers to the emergence of new cross-cultural forms and identities established by colonialism. Rather than the blending of two different cultures, hybridity happens as a result of the meeting between colonizers/colonized, creating two different cultural spaces in an attempt at assimilation. He argues that between these two spaces of different cultures, namely Western and other, a third space exists, a space which is neither wholly one culture nor the other. Bhabha writes:

These 'in- between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself. It is in the emergence of the interstices – the overlap and displacement of domains of difference – that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated. (2)

In other words, the third space becomes the space in which new identity formation occurs as a result of hybridization. A site of negotiation and resistance where new meanings, identities, and ideas are formed, it is a space where the two cultures interact and create something new. Bhabha also mentions the idea of "nationness," which refers to the collective experiences and shared sense of identity that emerges from these negotiations and interactions in the in-between spaces. It is through the third space that new possibilities for social and political reconstruction can be achieved, creating new hybrid cultural forms. In other words, hybridity can be a means of dealing with coloniality through the development of new forms of cultural expression and social organization that challenge existing power systems and provide new perspectives on identity and community.

Another concept closely connected to Bhabha's theoretical framework is mimicry, which he describes as a process in which a colonized culture imitates the colonizer's culture in an attempt to gain power or authority. Bhabha argues that mimicry involves imitation and subversion as colonized cultures struggle for cultural agency and identity. He writes how mimicry is "the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which 'appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power" (122). In other words, mimicry can be a strategy of reform, regulation, and discipline through which the colonized subject seeks to appropriate and imitate elements of the dominant culture in order to gain cultural agency and a sense of belonging within the dominant culture. However, Bhabha also argues that mimicry can be a form of rebellion, as imitation is never exact and always involves a degree of difference or deviation (122). This deviation disrupts the binary oppositions between colonizer/colonized and challenges the dominant culture's claim to absolute power and authority (Bhabha 126). Mimicry can then be a form of resistance as well as subversion, as the colonized subject appropriates the dominant culture while also parodying and undermining it. In sum, Bhabha highlights the complex process of negotiation and adaptation that occurs in colonial encounters and the potential for resistance and subversion inherent in this process.

Another concept that will be discussed is *magical realism*, a literary technique that embodies the concept of hybridity by combining the real and the magical, blurring the boundaries between the ordinary and the extraordinary. In essence, it is a genre that combines magical elements (such as a boy turning into a bear) in a realistic setting that we recognize, creating a narrative where extraordinary occurrences are presented as part of everyday life. An oxymoron, magical realism in literature provides a narrative space where authors (such as Salman Rushdie, Toni Morrison, and Leslie Marmon Silko) can express subaltern experiences and ideas through the subversion of the dominant narrative to provide other perspectives by

defying conventional realism (Bowers 63, 77). Furthermore, it should be noted that the concept is complex and debated in its definition and usage. Maggie Ann Bowers writes in *Magic(al) Realism* about the complexity in defining the term, as it has had different meanings in different languages/cultures, but also in the issue of defining what is real and what is magical (1-2, 80).

Bowers writes:

Magical realism is often criticized for relying on a European viewpoint that assumes that magic and the irrational belong to indigenous and non-European cultures, whereas rationality and a true sense of reality belong to a European perspective. (80)

In other words, the concept is defined with a bias towards Western knowledge, making it appear more legitimate than other forms of knowledge and therefore having precedence over defining what is real. For this reason, writers such as Silko have rejected the term (Bowers 80). However, Bowers writes that authors use this technique "to express their own personal interpretations of their cross-cultural contexts in the face of domination by European American culture" (80). She points out that using Western culture in the stories helps challenge their authority by creating a liminal space between the real and magical, allowing writers to express their cross-cultural experience (81). This in-between space can be seen as a place of enunciation, "the third place," where multiple perspectives coexist and negotiate new identities. This space then becomes a site of negotiation, resistance, and transformation, allowing writers to explore their cross-cultural experiences and critique the dominance of Western knowledge systems. The interplay between the real and the magical symbolizes the complexities of cultural hybridity and serves as a narrative strategy for expressing identity, history, and the impact of colonialism, contributing to a more inclusive understanding of the world.

Hybridity is a key concept in Native American studies as it describes the ways in which Native American communities have navigated and adapted to conflicting cultures and worldviews of Native and non-native people (Allen 3; Fowler 63). Cynthia Fowler argues that Native American artists today use hybridity in their work to "reveal negative and limiting constructs of Indian identity that continue to prevail within the dominant culture" while also having "used hybridity as a tool to (re)define their cultural identities on their own terms, as a strategy for self-determination" (77). So, applying the concept of hybridity in the analysis will help understand Tayo's identity formation as a mixed-race individual trying to understand his place between the two communities.

3. Coloniality & Identity Construction

Leslie Marmon Silko makes the legacy of colonialism a central theme in *Ceremony*, highlighting its lasting effects on the Pueblo community's everyday life. Taking place in the Native American reservation Laguna Pueblo, located in New Mexico, the story gives the reader a glimpse into the struggles of the Pueblo people. While the characters are aware of their colonial past and its effect on their financial and social situation, the subtle power play that is coloniality remains largely unnoticed. However, during Tayo's journey of self-discovery, these hidden interplays become apparent as he becomes conscious of the coloniality that keeps hold over their daily life. This chapter will explore how the characters are affected by coloniality and how it influences the process of identity formation within the characters by focusing on the coloniality of language and knowledge.

3.1 Language & Storytelling

Language is an important area in the field of coloniality studies, as it plays a vital role in society and can be utilized as a tool for exerting control. In *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*, Mignolo discusses the function language has had in defining "boundaries of a community by distinguishing it from other communities" (288) and its function today in the formation of knowledge and cultural production which contribute to the coloniality of power (292). In other words, language shifts the power to the hegemonic language holder through the control of what is considered to be knowledge. Ashcroft et al. write that "language becomes the medium through which a hierarchical structure of power is perpetuated, and the medium through which conceptions of 'truth,' 'order,' and 'reality' become established" (7). This then furthers the notion of the power of language in establishing what reality is and its effect on individuals and societies alike, targeting the subaltern. In line with this, the novel explores the coloniality of language and its effect through the presence (and absence) of their native language of Keres (See "Laguna Pueblo Indians Tribe") and English.

The importance of the spoken word and language is a central theme in the novel. While the importance of storytelling, which I will discuss further down in this section, is much more discussed in studies of *Ceremony*, the use of language is less so. Gloria Swan discusses the perception of language within Laguna culture:

Laguna ideology presumes that thought gives form and substance to ideas which in turn become manifest through speech. Therefore words actualize what is – they determine reality by bringing order to chaos, generating life and well-being, and restoring harmony as a counter to disorder and disease. (317)

In other words, the act of vocalizing thoughts into words transforms an idea into something tangible and real. This then portrays speech as a powerful tool with the transformative power that brings order to a fragmented world. While this can be said about Western literary language as well, the difference lies in the belief that thoughts possess the power to become manifest through speech and acquire tangible form and substance. Speech has the power to not only describe reality but also to bring it to life through storytelling. This furthers the argument for the importance of language in the novel for not only the characters but also the community. With this in mind, the act of speech, of orality in storytelling, is further understood as detrimental to the survival of the Pueblo people, whose ideology values the act of speaking. As Swan proposes, language and storytelling in the novel are put forth as something that can destroy and silence but also create and connect.

In the context of *Ceremony*, the coloniality of language can be found in the pervasive presence of English in the Laguna Pueblo community. For the characters residing in Laguna Pueblo, their own language of Keres is losing its place in their everyday life and is mainly used by the community's elders. English has become the hegemonic language in the community, which is further demonstrated in that it is the language that the novel was originally written. Although it is not explicitly stated how much of the dialogues are in English or Keres, it is understood that English is mainly used as it is noted by Tayo as he reacts whenever a character (such as the medicine men Ku'oosh and Betonie) speaks or uses an expression in their native tongue. The awkwardness of Keres is first noted by Tayo during his first meeting with the local medicine man, old Ku'oosh, who:

[...] spoke softly, using the old dialect full of sentences that were involuted with explanations of their own origins, as if nothing the old man said were his own but all had been said before and he was only there to repeat it. Tayo had to strain to catch the meaning. (31)

This passage indicates that hearing the traditional dialect is a rare occurrence for Tayo, who goes on to describe his own language as "childish, interspersed with English words," leading him to "feel shame tightening in his throat" (31-32), revealing his frustration and embarrassment over his lacking proficiency in his native tongue. The passage highlights the Keres language's loss of ground and the shame experienced by Tayo as a result of it. Moreover, Tayo's describing Ku'oosh's sentences as "involved with explanations of their own origins" implies that the

language carries a deep sense of history and meaning. It suggests that every sentence is intricately woven with references to the origins and ancestral knowledge of the Pueblo community. Tayo's struggle to understand his Native tongue indicates a loss of fluency and the disconnect he experiences from his cultural heritage. It sheds light on the more significant consequence of the coloniality of language, in which English as the dominant language erodes cultural heritage and impedes effective communication causing a sense of disconnect and inadequacy within a subaltern community.

Furthermore, the coloniality of language and its impact on the characters are exemplified in the context of education. The power dynamics in language and knowledge help further the marginalization of subaltern communities. One way institutions of knowledge exert power is through the choice of a national language to perpetuate a linguistic hierarchy that marginalizes others (*Local Histories* 254). Judy M Iseke-Barnes discusses the power which can be exerted through language in educational institutes:

Education is a site of language struggles because of its great influence and because of the power assigned to education to control and implement value systems, to determine who gets to speak which languages, to decide who gets to succeed and to ascribe a value system which controls the conditions under which we learn, and what we learn to value. (68)

Linguistic imperialism can reinforce colonial structure by limiting opportunities and shaping the minds and values of the subaltern community. Moreover, Iseke-Barnes goes on to argue that the language used in education is the one that is used to assess and therefore holds "the power to exclude and to control" (69), reinforcing the power structures put in place by coloniality and further limiting the subaltern communities' influence. This dynamic is exemplified in the novel as it depicts Tayo and Rocky's time in a (government-run) American Indian boarding school, which profoundly influences their identity and worldview, highlighting how the power dynamics of language and knowledge perpetuate the marginalization of subaltern communities.

While storytelling is an integral part of the Native American culture, Silko shows how it has lost its importance in the Pueblo community and the consequences of it. Oral storytelling has an important function as a means of transmitting cultural knowledge. For southwest Native Americans, it has served various roles, such as portraying historical events, education, and entertainment (Wiget 55-56; Forbes 18). David A Rice points to how Silko highlights language, and in particular storytelling, "as a way of constructing reality" that is "integral to the very survival and reemergence of Indigenous people in response to Euramerican colonialism" (117).

This power is exemplified in how Tayo perceives the world as made up of stories with timeless narratives, as something living and in constant transformation (88). However, as the community becomes disconnected from storytelling, community members also disconnect from not only their cultural knowledge but also their ability to renew and resist in a changing time.

Silko also brings forth storytelling as a vital part of the individual's, as well as the community's, way of healing from coloniality. Through Tayo, storytelling is portrayed as a transformative practice that is imperative in the healing of the Pueblo community, a practice that can help them in overcoming the colonial oppression they have faced. While *Ceremony* shows how storytelling has lost its value among the character in the community, Tayo is one of the few that has had an interest in the stories told by Josiah and Grandma during his childhood. Throughout his journey, he references the stories he has heard, contemplating their functions and ultimately leading him to realize the transformative power they hold. Tayo thinks back to a time in his childhood climbing a mesa and feeling with certainty that he could reach the moon:

Distance and days existed in themselves then; they all had a story. They were not barriers. If a person wanted to get to the moon, there was a way; it all depended on whether you knew the directions – exactly which way to go and what to do to get there; it depended on whether you knew the story of how others before you had gone. (17-18)

His reflection underscores the connection between storytelling and what is perceived as real, as well as its transformative abilities. If you know the story, anything is possible. It becomes a tool to transform the world, enabling individuals to transcend the constraints of coloniality and reclaim their cultural heritage. This then becomes a way in which the Pueblo community can find a place collectively to find peace and restorative powers to heal as a community. To reiterate Swan's statement, in Laguna tradition, the act of speech gives form to ideas, making them real, indicating the importance of storytelling for their community. So, when storytelling loses its place in the culture, the community becomes disconnected from its cultural knowledge, and the power of transformation is lost, as well as the ability for collective healing.

Ultimately, storytelling becomes a powerful form of resistance and a means to challenge the coloniality of knowledge and power. Through Tayo, Silko shows the transformative powers in the act of resistance against the dominant narrative that dismisses traditional storytelling as mere entertainment with no further function. His convictions about the importance of storytelling only grow throughout the story, as he shows resistance to the schoolteachers who dismiss them as "nonsense" (18). Tayo develops an unwavering belief in the stories he hears, always feeling a strong connection and sense of truth within the stories that the school could not take from him to him they are true (87). The stories function as a counter-narrative to the

hegemonic discourse stemming from coloniality, asserting the different ways of understanding the world. In one pivotal scene, Tayo uses the power of storytelling as an act of resistance. While in the bar with the other veterans sharing war stories, Tayo feels repulsed over their way of dealing with their exclusion from the white community after the war. He knows that the reason they tell these stories is to convince themselves that they still belong:

Here they were, trying to bring back that old feeling, that feeling they belonged to America the way they felt during the war. [...] Tayo knew what they had been trying to do. They repeated the stories about good times in Oakland and San Diego; they repeated them like long medicine chants, the beer bottles punding on the counter tops like drums. (39).

Tayo is the only one that recognizes that their storytelling is an attempt to reclaim their sense of belonging, so they unconsciously form a chanting group in the bar, with beer bottles acting as drums as they recount what they once were a part of in an attempt to resist the alienation that has been imposed by coloniality. This highlights how storytelling serves as a form of resistance against two levels of marginalization: the erasure of Native knowledge and the alienation experienced by Native people. It emphasizes how Tayo's use of storytelling allows him to challenge the dominant narrative imposed by coloniality and affirm the validity of Native narratives. Furthermore, it highlights that storytelling serves as a means for Tayo and the other veterans to resist the alienation they feel after returning from war and reclaiming a sense of belonging and identity.

3.2 Western Epistemology & Indigenous Knowledge

In the novel, Silko critiques the imposition of Western knowledge through the actions, thoughts, and perceptions of the characters. This critique aligns with Mignolo's argument:

[...] the colonialization of knowledge and being consisted of using imperial knowledge to repress colonized subjectivities and the process moves from there to build structures of knowledge that emerge from the experience of humiliation and marginalization that have been and continue to be enacted by the implementation of the colonial matrix of power. (Mignolo 492)

The coloniality of knowledge is most notable in its impact on Western education, which Tayo and Rocky experience in the American Indian boarding school they attend together. In the boarding school, Tayo learns to adopt Western knowledge as an undisputed fact, as Tayo recalls an instance during science class when they had to dissect frogs. Due to their beliefs, the Navajo students chose to leave the classroom rather than participate in the dissection of frogs. In Navajo

culture, killing frogs will anger the frogs themselves, causing them to summon heavy rain that could result in floods (181). The students' decision to abstain from the activity came from their desire to respect and honor their beliefs regarding the interconnectedness to nature and their responsibility to maintain harmony with it. The teacher "laughed loudly, for a long time" (181), denouncing it as ridiculous superstition as it clearly has not happened before and will not happen now. This interaction emphasizes the coloniality of knowledge and the power dynamics prevalent from an early age. The teacher reinforces the dominant Western narrative by positioning Native American beliefs as irrational and primitive.

Although Tayo and Rocky have the same experience at the boarding school, their development diverges drastically. While Tayo retains some of his Pueblo heritage, Rocky adapts, becoming the exemplification of the influence of Western epistemology in shaping thoughts and identity. His attitude is best exemplified in the scene where Rocky, Tayo, Robert, and Josiah go deer hunting (46-48). After killing the deer, Rocky immediately sets to skinning it, going against Native American tradition. While Tayo almost naturally reacts to the absence of ceremony in the act, becoming visibly uncomfortable by the staring eyes of the deer, he quickly covers the deer's head with his jacket. Rocky knows the rituals, but he refuses to be part of them as he feels embarrassed over the ridiculous traditions. Rocky's assimilation to Western knowledge is further exemplified when discussing the book on cattle written by white people who knew nothing about their land (69). Rocky retorts:

Those books are written by scientists. They know everything there is to know about beef cattle. That's the trouble with the way the people around here have always done things – they never knew what they were doing. (69-70)

This further illustrates Rocky's assimilation reinforced by Western epistemology, where Native American knowledge is undermined next to Western knowledge. On the other hand, Tayo is a character who eventually questions the teachings of his youth. He remembers how:

[i]n school the science teacher had explained what superstition was, and then held the science textbook up for the class to see the true source of explanations. He had studied those books, and he had no reasons to believe the stories any more. The science books explained the cause and effects. (87)

Even though accepting the teachings he received as facts, he never truly lost his connection and belief in the stories Grandma would tell: "he still felt it was true, despite all they had taught him in school" (87). While Tayo retains his connection to his Native heritage, continuing to hold the belief in the stories passed down by Grandma, Rocky, on the other hand, fully embraces Western epistemology and dismisses Native American traditions as absurd and lacking in

knowledge. These examples illustrate how Rocky and Tayo diverge in their response to the coloniality of knowledge and its influence on their identity and worldviews.

Furthermore, the influence of the coloniality of knowledge becomes apparent in how the perspectives of communal and individual identities are contrasted. The difference in worldview becomes problematic, resulting in conflicts but also confusion in the characters' identity construction. The project of individualizing the Native American community has historically been enforced by the U.S. government through politics in attempts to assimilate and remove the reservation system (Janke 158).¹ However, this imposition of individualism is also seen on a coloniality level within the novel through the characters. Tayo reflects on the imposition of Christianity in their community and how it has come to impact their communal bonds:

All of creation suddenly had two names: an Indian name and a white name. Christianity separated the people from themselves; it tried to crush the single clan name, encouraging each person to stand alone, because Jesus Christ would save only the individual soul; Jesus Christ was not like the Mother who loved and cared for them as her children, as her family. (62-63)

The individual salvation that became of importance stands in sharp contrast to the nurturing relationship with the Mother that connected all beings and nature. This interconnected communal relationship has become disrupted, exemplified by the divide in all creations into "Indian name" and "white name," which creates binary categories within the colonial paradigm. Leroy Little Bear points to the difference between the two spheres of knowledge by arguing that while Western science isolates to understand something as a fact, the Native American view is to see everything holistically, always seeing the interconnectedness in the world (8:14-37). The disruption caused by Western epistemology creates fragmentation and confusion for the characters, which hinders their ability to navigate and comprehend their changing reality and reflects the influence of the coloniality of knowledge on their communal and individual identities.

¹ See Janke (158) for a quote by the U.S Department of the Interior in 1962 regarding their stand in the individualization of Native Americans.

4. Hybridity & Resistance

In her written works, Silko masterfully employs the literary techniques of hybridity and magical realism to effectively portray the complexities of cultural blending, the strength of indigenous traditions, and the resistance against dominant power structures. Through her skilled use of these techniques, Silko is able to craft a vivid and thought-provoking depiction of the complex dynamics at play in the conflict of cultures while at the same time highlighting the importance of maintaining one's heritage and resisting oppression. In this section, the employment of hybridity and magical realism will be explored, and how they influence Tayo in his search for identity and healing. Moreover, the two narrative techniques and their function as a form of resistance against colonial power structures will be examined so as to highlight their potential for challenging dominant narratives.

4.1 Hybridity as Resistance against Coloniality

Ceremony is rife with hybridity in various forms, furthering Bhabha's idea that hybridity is a space of cultural negotiation and transformation. Signs of hybridity can be most prominently found in the protagonist. By constructing the protagonist with a hybrid identity, Silko highlights the challenges individuals who do not fit into predetermined categories face as they become the force that is used to question the boundaries and limitations imposed by societal norms constructed by coloniality. As a mixed-race person, Tayo is caught between two worlds. While he was raised in the Laguna Pueblo community, the pervasiveness of coloniality contributes to the community's view of his racial hybridity as something "other." By being mixed, he is placed in a position defying racial but also cultural purity, which in turn challenges the dominant narratives perpetuated by coloniality. Therefore, this sense of "othering" is experienced from both sides; he is not viewed as a full member on either side but stuck in the middle of the two. As a result, Tayo seeks to understand and navigate the different languages, cultures, and ways of being in an effort to understand his place, ultimately becoming a catalyst for the destabilization of the fixed notions of identity held up by colonial power structures.

Tayo's mixed-race identity becomes a catalyst for resistance within the narrative. While in the bar, Tayo burst out: "Im half-breed. I'll be the first to say it. I'll speak for both sides. First time you walked down the street in Gallup or Albuquerque, you knew. Don't lie. You knew right away. The war was over, the uniform was gone" (39). Rice comments on this passage and

argues that Tayo here becomes the mediator; he is the one who can "voice Euramerican dismissal of Indians as well as Indian anger over it" (123). His racial hybridity, then, helps him become aware of both sides as he is forced to grapple with what that means for his own identity. Thus, Tayo becomes a central figure in the narrative's exploration of hybridity and the resistance against coloniality, as he embodies the dual perspectives.

Another form of hybridity is found in the structure of the writing of the novel. Silko incorporates traditional oral storytelling into the Western written form of a novel to create a hybrid narrative that creates a bridging of cultures. This, in turn, invokes Bhabha's notion of hybridity to create a liminal space where cultural forms meet, their "value[s] are negotiated," and the creation of new identities is possible (Bhabha 2). In other words, by incorporating Native American oral traditions within the Western literary tradition, Silko challenges the marginalization of indigenous voices by creating an "in-between" space for empowerment and re-negotiation of new cultural identities. This combination of different cultural forms allows for a dynamic exchange, where knowledge, values, as well as experience of the Pueblo community can be understood by a wider audience. The use of oral storytelling techniques within the written prose form creates a hybrid narrative that becomes a site of resistance, where Native culture is preserved but also disrupts Western discourse.

Hybridity emerges in the novel as a powerful tool of resistance against the oppressive forces of coloniality through the preservation of Native culture. Through the characters Tayo and Betonie, the acceptance of hybrid identities and practices are represented as a "medicine" for the destructive colonial power structures and their imposition on Native American identity and culture. Rice's analysis suggests that the characters' choice "to maintain a connection to Native heritage while recognizing the value of cultural hybridity" while also being open to hybridization is a necessary step for survival (137). By embracing hybridity, the characters seek to subvert the oppressive power structure caused by coloniality. Betonie explains his position on why he has changed the ceremony:

[...] things which don't shift and grow are dead things. They are things the witchery people want. Witchery works to scare people, to make them fear growth. But [change] has always been necessary, and more than ever now, it is. Otherwise we won't make it. We won't survive. That's what the witchery is counting on: that we will cling to the ceremonies the way they were, and then their power will triumph, and the people will be no more. (116)

Betonie argues that with the arrival of white people, their world changed, and therefore their ceremonies must also adapt to the new world. Betonie reasons that the solution is not to dismiss Native knowledge as superstition, but instead, one must understand both sides and understand

their influence (Hobbs 306). This view aligns with the concept of hybridity as a tool of resistance. By recognizing the need for change in the face of coloniality, Betonie proposes the hybridization of ceremonies to combat the threat of erasure.

4.2 The Role of Magical Realism in Representing Hybridity and Resistance

Magical realism is a potent storytelling technique that is closely linked to hybridity and cultural negotiation. As a device that is often used by those with a connection to subaltern cultures, Bowers points out that "magical realism becomes a useful narrative device for expressing views that oppose the dominant way of thinking" (49). As a result of colonialism, the hegemony of Western discourse is challenged by the incorporation of other knowledge and worldviews. In the case of *Ceremony*, Silko masterfully integrates the magical into the story, blurring the boundaries of what is supernatural and real, and effectively disrupts the dominant Western narrative structure to authenticate Native American perspectives.

The novel follows two stories from two different worlds that ultimately become connected in a web of interconnected stories that ultimately challenges Western knowledge of reality. In the novel, poetry represents the mythical world, while the Laguna reservation represents reality. At first, this creates a magical realist feel. However, as the story progresses, the two worlds begin to blend together and influence each other. James Ruppert points to how the narrative structure changes as the story progresses, stating that "Silko emphasizes how myths grow, compliment, and structure reality" as the Laguna reservation storylines become expressed in poetry instead of prose (180). By blending the mythical with the real, the lines are blurred as they both influence each other's reality. Ultimately, by doing this, magical realism techniques become a potent tool to critique Western knowledge regarding the nature of what is considered real. Moreover, this narrative strategy also serves the purpose of affirming and preserving Native culture and identity. By embracing this hybridity and cultural negotiation in the novel, it contribute to the disruption of the dominant colonial narrative and opens up to alternate knowledge and worldviews.

Silko's intricate weaving of the stories makes the reader question what is real and what is mythical. After Tayo returns home, he is met with a drought that has been decimating the land for the past six years, an event he feels he has caused through his praying (13). Silko starts by recounting Tayo's time in the jungles, carrying Rocky's body in the never-ending rain, causing him to curse it:

He damned the rain until the words were a chant, and he sang it while he crawled through the mud to find the corporal and get him up before the Japanese saw them. He wanted the words to make a cloudless blue sky, pale with a summer sun pressing across wide and empty horizons. The words gathered inside him and gave him strength. He pulled on the corporal's arm; he lifted him to his knees and all the time he could hear his own voice praying against the rain. (11)

The passage then jumps to a poem about Corn Woman being angry with her sister Reed Woman, who spends her days bathing while Corn Woman toils away. Her anger makes Reed Woman leave:

And there was no more rain then.
Everything dried up
All the plants
The corn
The beans
They all dried up
And started blowing away
In the wind.

The people and the animals
Were thirsty.
They were starving. (12)

After this last line, Silko comes back to the prose narrative with the words: "So he had prayed the rain away, and for the sixth year it was dry; the grass turned yellow and it did not grow. Wherever he looked, Tayo could see the consequences of his praying; [...] and he cried for all of them, and for what he had done" (13). While Tayo's reflection can be brushed off as simple superstition, as drought can be explained in a rational way, the events and stories are not firmly established as either true or false, leaving them open for interpretation. By following Tayo's prayer of ending the rain with a Laguna myth in this way, Silko blurs the boundaries between reality and myth, leaving the reader to question the causal relationship between Tayo's prayer and the drought. This blending of reality and myth challenge the reader's perception of what is considered real, challenging the Western understanding of what reality is.

As the story progresses, the character Shush is introduced and becomes a part of both worlds' stories. Shush (meaning bear) is a young boy who assists Betonie, and upon their first meeting, Tayo feels a strange distance in his eyes (118). This again is followed by a poem telling the story of a child lost in the wilderness and brought in by bears. When the medicine man is sent out to find the lost child and return him home, he thinks as he finds the child in a bear-like state:

They couldn't simply take him back

Because he would be in between forever
And probably he would die.
[...]
So, long time ago
They got him back again
But he wasn't quite the same
After that
Not like the other children. (120)

In prose form, Betonie observes Tayo's reservations about the boy and urges him not to "be so quick to call something good or bad" and that he is in transition (120), further implying his connection to the bear realm. Betonie suggests Shush is stuck in an "in-between" place, much like Tayo, emphasizing the theme of hybridity and blurring the lines between the different worlds. Once again, the blending of narrative structures and the presence of characters like Shush contributes to the exploration of reality while simultaneously challenging the readers' perception of what is considered "real."

Silko's intricate weaving of stories and narrative structure creates a liminal space where different worlds intersect and coexist. Within this "third space" arises a zone of cultural negotiation in which alternative knowledge systems are brought forth and challenge the prevailing power structure. Silko challenges readers to rethink the rigid categorization of what is considered "real" by incorporating magical realism and blurring the lines between truth and myth. This blurring of borders is highlighted by Tayo's plea for rain in the face of a self-caused drought, as well as in the in-between status of the character Shush, which mirrors Tayo's own hybridity. The story challenges the colonial narrative by embracing hybridity and situating it inside the "third space," opening up opportunities for other viewpoints and worldviews. Finally, the investigation of the "third space" adds to the wider issues of cultural mixing, Native American resilience, and resistance against the dominant power structure become apparent. These literary techniques serve to enhance the portrayal of Tayo's search for identity while also contributing to the overarching thesis of challenging Western knowledge and colonial narrative.

5. Conclusion

This study has evaluated Leslie Marmon Silko's novel *Ceremony* through the lenses of coloniality and hybridity, as well as the function of magical realism. Silko depicts the complexities of cultural blending and the resistance against dominant power structures through the protagonist Tayo. The investigation of hybridity as a form of resistance to coloniality illustrates the challenges faced by individuals who do not fit into predetermined categories, much like Tayo, whose mixed-race identity becomes a catalyst for questioning and destabilizing fixed notions of identity perpetuated by colonial power structures set in place by coloniality. Furthermore, the incorporation of traditional oral storytelling practices into the Western literary tradition results in a hybrid narrative that challenges the marginalization of Native American voices and offers up opportunities for the negotiation of new cultural identities.

The findings of this study have important implications for comprehending Native American experiences and identities. The novel's representation of hybridity puts an emphasis on the struggles faced by individuals caught between two worlds, challenging the dominant narrative that perpetuates racial and cultural purity. By highlighting the challenges of navigating different languages, cultures, and ways of being, the study underscores the importance of recognizing and embracing hybrid identities as resistance against colonial power structures. Additionally, the employment of magical realism as a storytelling technique serves as a powerful tool to disrupt the dominant Western narrative structure and authenticate Native American perspectives and identities. By blending the mythical and the real, Silko challenges readers to question their understanding of reality and opens up space for alternate knowledge and worldviews, thus challenging the dominant narrative while preserving Native culture.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to the broader understanding of Native American experiences and identities. In *Ceremony*, we gain valuable insight into the lived realities of Native American individuals and communities. The novel's nuanced portrayal of the Native American experience and the resistance against dominant power structures deepen our understanding of how Native identities are shaped and preserved. Moreover, this study highlights the importance of recognizing and amplifying Native voices and perspectives within literary and academic discourse. By analyzing the literary techniques employed by Native American authors like Silko, the dominant narratives that historically have marginalized Native American cultures and knowledge systems can be challenged and disrupted. This then

contributes to a more inclusive and comprehensive understanding of indigenous experiences and identities.

6. References

- Allen, Chadwick. *Blood Narrative: Indigenous Identity in American Indian and Maori Literary and Activist Texts*. Duke UP, 2002.
- Ashcroft, Bill, et al. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Postcolonial Literatures*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2002. Taylor & Francis Group, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.ub.gu.se/10.4324/9780203426081>.
- Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. 1st ed., Routledge, 2004. ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/gu/detail.action?docID=653022>.
- Bowers, Maggie A. *Magic(Al) Realism*. 1st ed., Routledge, 2004. ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/gu/detail.action?docID=199376>.
- Forbes, Jack. "Colonialism and Native American Literature: Analysis." *Wicazo Sa Review*, vol. 3, no. 2, 1987, pp. 17–23. JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1408977>.
- Fowler, Cynthia. "Hybridity as a Strategy For Self-Determination in Contemporary American Indian Art." *Social Justice*, vol. 34, no. 1 (107), 2007, pp. 63–79. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/29768422>.
- Hobbs, Michael. "Living In-Between: Tayo as Radical Reader in Leslie Marmon Silko's 'Ceremony.'" *Western American Literature*, vol. 28, no. 4, 1994, pp. 301–12. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43021222>.
- Iseke-Barnes, Judy M. "Politics and Power of Languages: Indigenous Resistance to Colonizing Experiences of Language Dominance." *Journal of Thought*, vol. 39, no. 1, 2004, pp. 45–81. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42589774>.
- Janke, Ronald A. "Population, Reservations, and Federal Indian Policy." *Dictionary of Native American Literature*, edited by Andrew Wiget, Garland Publishing, 1994, pp. 155-174.
- "Laguna Pueblo Indians Tribe." *Tribalpedia*, <https://www.tribalpedia.com/us-tribes/a-l/laguna-pueblo-indians-tribe/>. Accessed 1 May 2023.
- Little Bear, Leroy. "Indigenous Knowledge and Western Science: Dr. Leroy Little Bear Talk." *YouTube*, uploaded by BanffEvents, 14 Jan 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gJSJ28eEUjI&t=1030s>.
- Mignolo, Walter D. "Delinking: The Rhetoric of Modernity, the Logic of Coloniality and the Grammar of De-Coloniality." *Cultural Studies*, vol. 21, no. 2-3, 2007, pp. 449–514.
- . *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledge, and Border Thinking*. Princeton University Press, 2000.
- Owens, Louis. "'The Very Essence of Our Lives': Leslie Silko's Webs of Identity." *Leslie Marmon Silko's Ceremony: A Casebook*, edited by Allan R. Chavkin, Oxford UP, 2002, pp.91-116.
- Qi, Zhou. "Leslie Marmon Silko's Ceremony: Hybridity in Identity Reconstruction." *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal*, vol. 7, no. 5, May 2020, pp. 21-28, doi:10.14738/assrj.75.8175.
- Rice, David A. "Witchery, Indigenous Resistance, and Urban Space in Leslie Marmon Silko's Ceremony." *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, vol. 17, no. 4, 2005, pp. 114–43. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20737306>.
- Ruppert, James. "No Boundaries, Only Transitions: Ceremony." *Leslie Marmon Silko's Ceremony: A Casebook*, edited by Allan R. Chavkin, Oxford UP, 2002, pp.175-191.
- Shackleton, Mark. "Native North American Writing and Postcolonialism." *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies (HJEAS)*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2001, pp. 69–84. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41274147>.
- Silko, Leslie M. *Ceremony*. Penguin Books, 2016.

Swan, Edith. "Healing via the Sunwise Cycle in Silko's 'Ceremony.'" *American Indian Quarterly*, vol. 12, no. 4, 1988, pp. 313–328. JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1184404>.

Wiget, Andrew. "Oral Literature of the Southwest." *Dictionary of Native American Literature*, edited by Andrew Wiget, Garland Publishing, 1994, pp. 53-64.