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THE "WHIRLING DARKNESS" OF NOW: UNCONVENTIONAL APOCALYPSE IN LESLIE MARMON SILKO'S *CEREMONY*

ABSTRACT: Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* (1977) utilizes an apocalyptic tale as its narrative core. This apocalyptic narrative flies in the face of many of the conventions set forth by other Judaic, Christian, Islamic, and even Native American eschatological narratives. Indeed, *Ceremony's* apocalypse is not a discrete, well-defined event, but an ongoing and potentially eternal cycle. As such, the apocalypse presented by Silko is not based in scheme of destruction and rebirth, but, rather, patterns of survival against an ever-encroaching, ever-present erasure of identity. It is an end time without an end, without culmination and, therefore, without a guaranteed salvation or dénouement. In this way, Silko's *Ceremony* creates a bold new vision of apocalypse, one that finds its basis in Native American culture and experience but redefines what it might mean to experience an "end-time."

Within many religious and spiritual traditions (in particular, Christianity, Judaism and Islam), apocalypse is, at its root, a force of purgation that cleanses old and presumably harmful beliefs and behaviors from the world through widespread physical death and destruction. Understandably, then, many eschatological narratives tend to centre around "notions of inexorable decline [and] the implicit moral bankruptcy of humankind" (McMurray). A widespread "wrong" must first exist so the sublime force of apocalypse might sweep it away and thus reveal the ethical wastelands and untold horrorscapes within eschatology as representing a progressive stage in some grand building project, a creaky step on a much larger stairway to paradise. In this way, many apocalypses operate dualistically, both as "the death of civilization ... yet also the beginning of an 'afterlife' when history is completed, all contradictions [are] resolved, [and] profane human time [is] replaced by ... sacred time" (McMurray). Indeed, the prototypical Western apocalypse, though grounded in images of tremendous bloodshed and destruction, "is [also] enmeshed in the logic of continuity," such that there is always, paradoxically, an "after" beyond The End (Gomel 407). Even within contemporary texts, which are often less rooted in traditional narratology, apocalypse still inherently entails the idea that "human culture does truly move to culmination, that there is a larger goal or a target toward which time's arrow is moving" (McMurray). This greater goal is, almost uniformly, the creation of a perfect world and/or the purgation of "wrong" behavior. Thus, apocalypse often represents a bleak—but ultimately necessary—transitory point along the trajectory toward the true "end of the world": utopia (or at least a more perfect world built out of the rubble of the post-apocalypse).

Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* (1977), which includes a mythic, eschatological tale as one of its forces of narrative cohesion, defies virtually all of these end-time conventions. The text's apocalypse is not based in a grand scheme of untold physical death and glorious rebirth, but, rather, focuses on an ongoing cyclical pattern of survival against an ever-encroaching, ever-present supreme destruction. It is an apocalypse without absolute finality, without culmination and, therefore, without a heavenly dénouement. It is "The End" without end. *Ceremony* also does not condemn humanity, or even one particular faction, for the evil that seeks to annihilate the world. The apocalypse—the "witchery" or "whirling darkness" as it is named within the text—does not arise from human sin or misbehavior but is, instead, a cosmically-driven force seemingly beyond the bounds of mortal cause and effect (242). Although *Ceremony's* apocalypse utilises human institutions and individuals to enact its devastation, it is not generated by transgressions of the human heart or soul; rather, its genesis lies in the realm of words and abstraction. It is a completely inhuman destroying power, a force that shuns concrete, visceral violence and, alternatively, utilises perceived Otherness—the paradigmatic, cultural, racial and philosophical divides that exist between peoples—to wreak havoc. Strangely, though, despite its ultimately divisive nature, this apocalypse is also represented as a terror against which all humanity can unite, regardless of race or creed. Through its overtly unorthodox nature, *Ceremony's* eschatological vision reshapes the very conception of the "end of the world" and challenges the idea that the apocalypse must be one final thunderous bang or one great concluding whimper. Indeed, the text posits an apocalypse of perpetual "now" that, foundationally, aims at homogenising the world through ideological, rather than overt physical, destruction.

The temporality of *Ceremony's* apocalypse is perhaps its most unique and unconventional attribute, in that immediacy is its key component. Apocalyptic narratives have long been founded in "the expectation of a final judgment not only of nations but of individual human beings" (Collins 147). In Judaic, Christian, Islamic, and even ancient Middle Eastern traditions, apocalypse tends to "envision the end of history ... [while] look[ing] forward to post-mortem reward" (DiTommaso 246). Generally, eschatological narrative is based on the supposition that the world and all of its inhabitants will die in a great cataclysm and, subsequently, receive punishment or reward. Following this judgment, a new utopian (or occasionally dystopian, in modern and post-modern eras) reality will be constructed for those individuals deemed worthy of such perfection (or, in modern/post-modern texts, those who have survived the apocalypse). A key feature of this description of apocalypse is the ever forward-looking nature of apocalypse; the end of the world *will* come, the righteous *will* receive a reward, utopia *will* be constructed. The apocalypse and post-apocalypse are relegated to the future, to a time yet to come, a fact which allows individuals in the present to prepare for the encroaching destruction and subsequent salvation. Yet, in *Ceremony*, the endtimes are not a distant point in the future or an amorphous state of destruction that has yet to take shape. Rather, the apocalypse represented within the text is occurs in the present, in our post-modern world.

Unlike much conventional Native American eschatology, which holds that “all Native Americans ... are [currently] living in a post-apocalyptic period” (Gross 129) and that Native peoples need to “recall and expect a return to their history” before European colonisation (Kyle 77), *Ceremony* boldly proposes that the apocalypse has not really passed and, perhaps, can never be temporally distanced from the functions of contemporary society. Such an idea of perpetual apocalyptic presence is radically divergent from Western eschatological traditions but well in keeping with Native American spirituality. For many Native American tribes, “apocalypse is defined not as the end of time, but as the end of the world ... although the traditional world ... may have come to an end, the worldview that informed that life still survives” (Gross 129). In other words, the old “world” may pass away, but the people in it, along with their traditions and beliefs, still live on. In this manner, Native Americans have been able to reconcile the continued existence of a loosely unified identity with the otherwise unfathomable physical and cultural genocide inflicted upon them by colonising Euro-Americans. Colonisers, the living, breathing embodiment of apocalypse for many Native American tribes, could ravage the land and the physical body of Native peoples, but they could not destroy tribal belief structures and traditions. Hence, in Native American eschatology, the world may end, but beliefs maintain their strength for all eternity.

Ceremony plays with this sense of simultaneous annihilation and continuation to great effect. The apocalypse within the text clearly involves destruction, but perhaps not at an ultimate level. In the prophetic narrative of the “whirling darkness,” the text describes how white colonisers will be utilised as tools of terror. According to the narrative,

They will kill the things they fear
all the animals
the people will starve.

They will poison the water
they will spin the water away
and there will be drought
the people will starve...

Entire villages will be wiped out
They will slaughter whole tribes...

And those they do not kill
will die anyway
at the destruction they see
at the loss
at the loss of the children
the loss will destroy the rest. (136)

Initially, this apocalyptic vision may seem totalising. There appears to be nothing left in the destroyers' wake; all Native peoples are killed, if not by starvation or guns or disease, then by loss of the future as exemplified in dead children. The "whirling darkness" seems to end all things. Yet this is far from true. *Ceremony* is teeming with living Native Americans and, obviously, Native Americans in the phenomenal reality external to the text have not been entirely destroyed by the heartless, non-fictional colonisation of the past, either. Thus, one of two possibilities must be true: either the narrative of the "whirling darkness" was not describing a true end of the world or the apocalypse has not yet entirely passed.

In order to understand *Ceremony's* eschatological stance with regard to this issue, it is necessary to turn to the end of the text, wherein the "whirling darkness" closes in upon itself. A passage describes how

Whirling darkness
has come back on itself.
It keeps all its witchery
to itself...

It is dead for now.
It is dead for now.
It is dead for now.
It is dead for now. (261)

The apocalypse has supposedly ended. However, its end is only viable for an undefined amount of time. The apocalypse is dead *for now*, the grammatical implication being that it can recur, or perhaps will necessarily recur, in the future. Indeed, these last four lines are evocative of prayer or mantra; they are a wishing away of the apocalyptic horror and an acknowledgment that it may still continue at another time or place. Such an idea, that the end of the world does not have a singular temporal point, is the critical break from conventional apocalyptic narrative and Native American end-time philosophy. In *Ceremony's* conception, the apocalypse is perpetually recurring; it is a cyclical system of waxing and waning destruction that has no readily discernable end. It is a static dread that permeates life, as even in a peaceful period one is always acutely aware that a period of destruction must follow. Indeed, *Ceremony's* apocalypse seems to be a force forever at the periphery of society, ready to strike out again without warning or provocation. Rather than a massive, instantaneous scourge—a thunderous bang, perhaps—the world is experiencing a painfully gradual ending, an eternal whimper. The "whirling darkness" simply does not "deliver a climactic moment of Last Judgment" that creates a momentary "limbo of common suffering," as most apocalypses tend to do. Instead, the "whirling darkness" prolongs the suffering, such that no narrative or existential climax is reached and no finality—whether in the form of ethereal utopia, desiccated post-apocalypse, or even hollow death—is experienced by those

living during the apocalypse (Gomel 406). Thus, the text suggests that the contemporary world, and, in fact, the world of *any era*, may unknowingly exist as a time of apocalypse. Because “apocalyptic forces ... [have] insinuated themselves into the physical processes of the planet and the mental furniture of the human animal,” the end of the world, the “witchery,” acts much like a cancer; it is endlessly spreading and retreating into remission while perpetually threatening the collapse of the entire system with which it is inexorably intertwined (McMurray).

Such an incrementally cyclical apocalypse marginally echoes Native American spirituality in that Native beliefs—from religious ceremonies and myths to more general eco-friendly philosophies—are fundamentally unchanging even while the rest of the Native world suffers erosion from the forces of nature, fate or, most pressingly, colonisation. Often, “there is little to no significant difference between the culture of a given Indian nation and its religion,” a fact that leads to the supposition that “unless a people’s religion can be maintained, it is not likely the rest of the culture can survive intact” (Gross 127). *Ceremony*’s apocalyptic narrative complements this foundational principle. In the face of the horror wrought by the “whirling darkness,” Tayo, the text’s protagonist, returns to Native American traditions, but in updated variations. Despite, or perhaps because of, the fact that his tribal land has been raped and his friends have been turned into veritable zombies—processes that, within the text, have no foreseeable end—Tayo embraces Pueblo spirituality. He creates his own contemporary ceremonies of renewal and communion with the land while adhering to the fundamental religious beliefs of the culture. Through this evolution, Tayo manages to keep Pueblo spirituality, and hence Pueblo culture and paradigms, alive and well in the face of the decimation of Pueblo lands and the Pueblo people. Were it not for the identity-effacing power of the “whirling darkness,” Tayo would not feel the need to reinforce his own cultural history, to gird himself with a reinvigorated sense of both self and community. His identity must be challenged and, further, attacked, before he realises how important a non-homogenised, proudly individuated identity truly is. The greater implication here is that one does not necessarily take a strong defensive position as regards one’s cultural—or perhaps even personal—identity unless it is threatened with erasure, which is precisely the modus operandi of *Ceremony*’s apocalypse. Therefore, the pressure of the “whirling darkness” allows for cultural reimagination and rediscovery, even if the traditional supporting structures of such cultures—such as religious ceremonies and rites of passage—have been destroyed. After all, as Tayo realises, traditions and ceremonies can always be resurrected or remade.

Ceremony’s eschatological narrative stresses the threat posed by the death of identity rather than physicality, which is an extremely unique approach to the end of the world. In most apocalyptic scenarios, from well-mined Judeo-Christian lore (i.e., the biblical Book of Revelation) to Islamic texts (the Qur’an’s explication of the Qiyamah, for example) and even Native American myths, the final destruction of physical reality is a central theme. Traditionally, the apocalypse wipes away the corruptible flesh-and-blood world and a new

reality, perfectly aligned with the "righteous" or "good" ideologies of the author or authorial culture, replaces the flawed reality from which it proceeds. Of course, in more contemporary eras (the late nineteenth century and beyond), this utopian hopefulness has been inverted, such that, often, only a post-apocalyptic wasteland devoid of value and moral judgment is left after the end of the world. Regardless, in either outcome, the horror of apocalyptic force comes from the destruction of all the quantifiable, *physical trappings* of existence. It is from the physical deaths—the bloodshed, rending of flesh and snapping of bones—coupled with the crumbling of cities and towns and the withering and burning of the global ecosystem, that traditional apocalypses gain their power to induce a fearful shudder. Paradigms, religions and philosophies are simply assumed to live on in one form or another as long as there are souls or survivors to believe in and utilise them. Such intangibles are not usually mentioned as casualties of an apocalypse. Yet, in *Ceremony*, they are the primary target of the entropic "whirling darkness." The apocalyptic narrative explains that the "white skin people"—the aggregation of Euro-centric power structures and institutions that have existed as a colonising force since the late fifteenth century—destroy other cultures because of a murderous philosophy, saying that

... they grow away from the earth
then they grow away from the sun
then they grow away from the plants and animals.
They see no life
When they look
they see only objects.
The world is a dead thing for them
the trees and rivers are not alive
the mountains and stones are not alive...
They see no life.

They fear
They fear the world.
They destroy what they fear.
They fear themselves. (135)

The belief structure inherent in the white culture of the narrative is antithetical to Native American dogmas. "White skin people" objectify the land and attribute no particular spiritual significance to it. Native Americans, however, believe that "the land manifests soul: its own, an individual's, [and] a community's" (Cochran 70). Loss of the land at the hands of a violent Other is tragic, but the loss of soul due to destruction of land is far worse. Ultimately, the apocalyptic terror that is inflicted upon Native Americans in *Ceremony* stems more from the eradication of Native traditions and beliefs than from the disintegration of their tribal lands. The witchery's philosophy of objectification of the natural world and disregard for all things

living is the true apocalypse. Native Americans have lost land for centuries but have managed to maintain a coherent culture; what *Ceremony* guards against, therefore, is not the pillaging of land per se, but the destruction of all Native American ideology.

The danger of the *Ceremony*'s eschatological vision, then, lies in its "spiritually and culturally disintegrative impact" from the "loss of ... connection [with the land]" (Cochran 70). Tayo, like many other Native Americans, is, at base, not fighting for his land or even for the environment as a whole, but for his identity. At the beginning of the text, the witchery and whirling darkness have, figuratively, turned Tayo to white smoke. But, he does not realise he has lost his humanity because "white smoke [has] no consciousness of itself" (14). Tayo has simply "faded into the white world of ... bed sheets and walls" and become more of an object than an individual (14). His identity, as informed by Pueblo tradition and culture, has been stripped away. The same holds true for many other members of *Ceremony*'s Laguna community. Tayo and other Native Americans of his generation are in the midst of the cyclical apocalypse's onslaught; they are physically alive but their souls are dying, their identities are hollow, and their cultural belief structure has crumbled around their feet. Rather than taking the conventional, arguably easier, route by engaging in an outright physical annihilation of Native Americans, the text's apocalypse works through a system of assimilation; it erases Native spirituality and replaces it with witchery-induced objectification, thereby killing Native American culture and, eventually, the very concept of "Native American." Thus, the apocalypse in *Ceremony* has a goal far more stultifying than mere physical death could ever hope to be: complete and total Native American paradigmatic eradication.

Blame for the apocalypse presented in *Ceremony* is not laid at the feet of any one particular race, ethnicity or morally bankrupt group of individuals. Indeed, the apocalypse is caused through no apparent fault of humankind, a fact that opposes conventional apocalyptic thought, which seeks to "establish ... a temporal reign of the righteous ... [and] punish the wicked" (Harvey 81). In virtually all eschatological traditions, the apocalypse is brought about as a result of widespread "sin" or behaviours that deviate from a culture's moral norms. This is certainly true in Judeo-Christian apocalyptic narratives (in which the end of the world leads to the "creation of a new heaven and earth," a "glorious rebirth") and is even present in Native American end-time myths, many of which describe the white race as a punishing plague or as the moral violators in need of destruction (Harvey 81; Gomel 408). *Ceremony*, however, eschews all traditional punishment-based cause and effect. Its apocalypse arises from a story, a verbal tale, told by a witch who has no identity. The witch stands apart from humanity, "in the shadows," without anyone knowing where it came from; no one can even tell "if it was a woman or a man" (134). It spins the story, the "whirling darkness" that becomes the apocalypse, for no better reason than to win a contest "in dark things" (133). In a sense, the end of the world is brought about for amusement. There is no underlying theological, philosophical or even political reason for its existence. In the game played by the witches, the greatest evil of all, the prize-winning evil, is the one that lays waste to everything without any

greater purpose. Thus, *Ceremony's* apocalypse is the very essence of destruction and chaos; unlike traditional apocalypses, which are means to more elaborate ends (utopias, sweeping societal or cultural change, moral and ethical perfection, and so on), *Ceremony's* apocalypse is its own end. It leads to nothing greater because it is created for no other reason than to show off the awesome power of witchery and death. It is, essentially, destruction for destruction's sake.

Critical in the story of the whirling darkness's origin, and inexorably tied to its base nature, is the notion that the source of the apocalypse is not the white race. It is natural for Native American eschatology to focus on the white race as the ultimate plague, given the systematic genocide perpetrated against Native American peoples by Euro-American colonisers for centuries. Indeed, it is easy to understand how the "white skin people" could be viewed as the embodiment of apocalypse. Yet, *Ceremony* does not follow this path of simplistic logic. The text does not equate the apocalypse with the white race, in and of itself. Rather, the white race is merely a tool utilised by the witchery to enable apocalyptic destruction. Such a conception is remarkably equalising, as it drastically reduces the power of white colonisers. If white colonisers are not the controlling force behind the mass destruction of tribes and land, then they are little more than puppets, and are, potentially, also victimised by the witchery, albeit in a markedly different manner. In essence, *Ceremony's* apocalypse refuses to play into a power dichotomy of white versus Native American. Instead of setting the two cultures against one another, in a battle of binaries—"good" and "evil" or "pure" and "corrupt"—as some other Native American texts tend to do, *Ceremony* suggests that all people, regardless of race or culture, must band together to ward off the identity-erasing, apocalyptic witchery. If there is any dichotomy of Otherness in the text's apocalypse, it rests upon the stark differences between humanity writ large as a multicultural body and "witchery" as a stultifying monocultural force.

As if to reinforce the idea that the apocalypse is more than a racial conflict, even the gathering of witches from which the "whirling darkness" erupts is multi-ethnic. The text relates that, of the witches,

Some came from far far away
across oceans
across mountains.
Some had slanty eyes
others had black skin ... (133)

Here, the narrative intentionally blurs cultural lines in an effort to show that murderous and destructive tendencies can be found in all ethnic groups. Evil (which has a similar meaning to "totalisation" in the case of *Ceremony*) has no colour or cultural preference; it grows wherever its seed will flourish. Thus, the witch convention that spawns the "whirling

darkness" is represented as a melting pot of sorts. Equally, it is not the burden of one ethnic, cultural or racial faction to fight the apocalypse alone. Rather, after the polyglot witchery contest releases the whirling darkness, "human beings were one clan again, united by the fate the destroyers planned for all of them" (246). *Ceremony* is, therefore, "suggesting the universality of [the] healing ceremony" and the necessity of practising a warding process based on "memories, stories, and renewed reverence for the land" in every cultural group, regardless of Native American heritage (Cochran 79). Therefore, the text's apocalyptic narrative is, in all actuality, a rallying point for ethnic and racial unification rather than a charged polemic against Euro-American and Native American commingling.

Ceremony's end-time scenario is also novel in that it stresses an uneasy inactivity as the key to driving back destruction's advance. In ancient texts, there is no way for mortal men and women to halt the apocalypse. It is the will of God or of other spiritually divine beings, and is, therefore, beyond the reach of human combat. In more recent ages, apocalyptic destruction is, perhaps hubristically, represented as a force that can be turned back with the proper ingenuity or activism. *Ceremony*, in opposition to both of these conceptions, advocates neither fatalism nor activism. Instead, the text takes an optimistic, yet hands-off approach; it stresses the salvation of select individuals and understands that, in an apocalypse, it is better to assure the survival of a few than to strive in vain to save all.

At one of the most critical moments of the text, Tayo chooses the path of inaction. While Emo beats Harley, Tayo's best friend, to a bloody mess, "Tayo stay[s] on his knees in the shadows" (253). He wants to rescue his friend and end the torture, but doing so would only feed into the witchery's destructive cycle, a cycle in which Emo, Harley, Leroy and Pinkie are hopelessly bound. If Tayo had chosen to take an active role in the beating scene, he would not have been able to remain ideologically separate from the apocalyptic witchery. His retributive violence would have merely been another symptom of the whirling darkness's identity assimilation. Tayo would have become just another wild, raging, stereotypical Native American. Rather than fighting to save Harley, Tayo hides to preserve himself and, in effect, the sanctity of Native American paradigms. Tayo "had only to ... keep the story out of reach of the destroyers ... and their witchery would turn upon itself" (247). No counter-attack is necessary. Thus, the text seems to side with lighter, more optimistic, contemporary sentiment in believing that "nihilism and fundamentalism represent maladaptive responses to threat [from apocalypse]" (Eckersley 39). However, the text also disagrees with less polarised (and polarising) contemporary cultural crusaders, who adhere to the principle that "activism is an adaptive response, closely associated with the drive for sustainability" (Eckersley 39). Unlike ancient or contemporary eschatological theories, *Ceremony* eschews both desperation and combat entirely, even if these forces are directed toward eventual peace, sustainability or life-preservation. The text's suggested method of facing apocalypse, instead, is to maintain a rigid defence; the all-important tools for deflecting total annihilation are composure and strength of will, both directed toward the stolid *endurance* of culture and identity, not its abandonment or zealous proselytisation.

One final manner in which *Ceremony* tends toward a unique conception of eschatology is in the whirling darkness's origin: a story. As mentioned previously, the majority of apocalypses arise from a divine being's act of will or humanity's missteps. The whirling darkness of *Ceremony* is not a result of either of these processes. It springs from narration itself. As the text describes, the witch with the tale of whirling darkness told the other witches that "what I have is a story," and, in response, the other witches "all laughed" (135). A story is an unlikely propulsion device for the physical end of the world. Yet, as it grows, takes shape and makes the leap from textual realm to physical manifestation, a story can become the most devastating weapon. This is because stories contain belief systems, ideologies and the identities of entire cultures. Thus, one powerful story filled with a conflicting ideology can wipe away all other stories, thereby nullifying all the cultures that have used those stories as referential handbooks for existence. As Gross astutely points out, "as long as the sacred stories of a people remain viable, their religion and culture can remain functional" (128). *Ceremony's* apocalypse makes these sacred stories unviable by destroying them or erasing their conceptual content and replacing it with a violent, objectifying ideology.

Words, then, are given dominion over the end of the world. Words are also, in opposition, the only means of survival. From words, from stories and the underlying paradigms they contain, emerge actions both violent and altruistic. Wars, in their most primitive state, are little more than differences in ideas; therefore, if stories are the greatest repositories for ideas, it is reasonable to assume that the apocalypse, the ultimate conflict, could arise from a story. Equally, cultures can only fully survive the apocalyptic onslaught by maintaining the fundamental sanctity of their stories. Bomb shelters and machine guns, tanks and anthrax, are not the most assured methods of ultimate destruction or continued existence. Rather, stories will carry the world, either to its final rest or to a new day. Thus, in its barest form, *Ceremony's* eschatology "affirms the value of storytelling content to cultural identity" and suggests that the greatest danger to a civilisation is its opposing ideology (Cochran 70-1).

Within much Western cultural and religious tradition, apocalypses have been represented, at their basest level, as relatively structured and discrete phenomena. They may have differing means, but the general pattern of the apocalypse rarely changes: there is massive destruction of physical reality brought on by a flaw in humanity, which leads to untold death and a subsequent rebirth into a world with new ideologies. Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*, however, shatters this "conventional" apocalyptic mould. Within its pages lies the witchery-induced "whirling darkness," an ever-present, ever-cycling apocalypse that has no clear end. The apocalyptic whirling darkness exists not because of human foible but merely because evil is present in the universe. It has been called into being through something as innocuous as a story, rather than through a divine gesture or human achievement gone awry. *Ceremony's* apocalypse is also an entreaty to people of all cultures; it demands that ethnic and racial divides be set aside so that a unified defence can be held against a force that seeks to eradicate all unique identity. This force identifies not with one particular race or

creed, but has, instead, parasitically attached itself to any people who may be in the position of conqueror or coloniser. Rather than fighting against the violence inherent in end-of-the-world destruction, the text, counter-intuitively, proffers the possibility that inaction and temporary concealment from conflict may be the best solution for long-term survival. In all this, then, *Ceremony's* eschatological vision is unlike most representations of apocalypse. It alters the meaning and nature of the very concept of "the end of the world" and provides a clear characterisation of a force that will eternally recur in an effort to wipe blank the very fabric of identity and culture and is, therefore, more ideologically frightening than any number of atomic bombs or divine rains of blood.

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