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# Bloody Mud, Rifle Butts, and Barbed Wire: Transforming the Bataan Death March in Silko's *Ceremony*

PETER G. BEIDLER

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Good novelists often base their work on biographical and historical facts, but then transform those facts into the magic of fiction. In this essay, I show how Leslie Marmon Silko took factual raw materials and, through the alchemy of her creative artistry, transformed her novel *Ceremony* into something quite new and different. I consider first the real-life inspiration for several of the Laguna soldiers in *Ceremony* who fought in World War II. I then suggest a historical source for Silko's information about the Bataan Death March and discuss some of the changes that Silko made in portraying the march in *Ceremony*. These changes help us to understand Silko's purposes in creating the character of Tayo and the forces that put him in need of the ceremony that lies at the heart of the novel. I also show that Silko portrayed the Japanese with considerable sympathy.

## WAR VETERANS

In a letter to her friend James Wright on 16 June 1979, just two years after the publication of *Ceremony*, Silko wrote of having recently visited Laguna from her home in Tucson:

I have just returned from a short visit at Laguna . . . I thought a great deal about two of my father's first cousins, Jack and Les, both dead now—Les died while I was here in Tucson. He wasn't old, but he was one of the men I was writing about when I wrote *Ceremony*. Les had been a football star at the U. of New Mexico for one semester before

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he was drafted. The local press called him “Squaw” because he was Laguna. He was over six feet tall and even these last years he was a strong man—except for what the liquor did. I suppose it might be because a good part of him became part of the main characters of the novel that I spent some time looking at the house he and his brother Jack had lived in. . . . I suppose Les will be remembered for being called “Squaw” in the *Albuquerque Journal* and for his car wrecks and brawls.<sup>1</sup>

This letter shows, among other things, that Silko based several of the characters in *Ceremony* on her father’s cousin, Robert Leslie “Les” Evans. This football player, whose name was made familiar by write-ups in the *Albuquerque Journal*, might have been in a general sense a model for Rocky, who showed great promise as a football player before he went off to war. Rocky was “the best football player Albuquerque Indian School ever had.”<sup>2</sup> Old Grandma, we are told, particularly mourned the death of Rocky and liked to imagine

the things he was going to do for her. They all mourned Rocky that way, by slipping, lapsing into the plans he had for college and for his football career. It didn’t take Tayo long to see the accident of time and space: Rocky was the one who was alive, buying grandma her heater with the round dial on the front; Rocky was there in the college game scores on the sports page of the *Albuquerque Journal*. (28)

Silko’s letter also gives evidence of the kinds of changes she made in transforming facts into fiction. Unlike Les Evans, Rocky was not drafted from college, but rather enlisted voluntarily before he went off to college. Unlike Les Evans, Rocky died a hero in the Philippines, not an alcoholic in Laguna. Indeed, it seems that Silko used bits of Les Evans as a rough model for several of what she calls the “main characters” in *Ceremony*. She is referring to the decorated vets who returned from the war and became a part of a self-destructive pattern that Tayo’s doctor connects to the war experience: “Reports note that since the Second World War a pattern of drinking and violence, not previously seen before, is emerging among Indian veterans” (53). The reports fit well enough with the lives of Emo, Pinkie, Leroy, and, to a lesser extent, Harley—Tayo’s veteran buddies.

Evans’s son recently presented another view that shows the extent to which Tayo himself is based on his father, Les Evans. In a talk given to a class at Haskell Indian Nations University in December 2002, Duane Leslie Evans gave an informal account of his father’s life, illustrated with photos and war medals. D. Leslie Evans never knew his father, who abandoned his family early on, but was raised mostly by his Potawatomi grandmother. Much of what he knows about his father, he tells us, he learned by investigations he made after the BIA informed him that his father had died.

D. Leslie Evans is a distant cousin of Leslie Marmon Silko. As he explains in his talk, edited elsewhere in this issue by Denise Low,<sup>3</sup> he and Silko had the same great-grandfather, a white man named Robert Gunn Marmon who had married successively two sisters. The first, Agnes Anaya, was D. Leslie Evans’s

great-grandmother. After Agnes died in childbirth, having already given birth to several older children, Marmon married his first wife's younger sister, Marie Anaya. He and Marie had seven children, one of whom, Henry Anaya "Hank" Marmon, was Silko's grandfather.

D. Leslie Evans says that Silko's Tayo is based on his father, Les Evans, who was a survivor of the Bataan Death March and lived out the last part of World War II in a prisoner of war camp in Manchuria. He reports that his father was something of a hero—a tall, strong man who on the march carried on his back one of his wounded fellow soldiers who would surely have perished without his help.<sup>4</sup> Although the tall and manly hero that D. Leslie Evans describes was somewhat different from the gentle and diminutive Tayo of *Ceremony*, there can be no doubt that Tayo was in some sense based on real Indians whom Silko had known or to whom she was related. The differences are significant, however. There is no evidence, for example, that Les Evans underwent a curative ceremony, just as there is no hint that Tayo will die an alcoholic. While Silko was clearly working with historical and biographical facts when she wrote *Ceremony*, she adapted those facts to her fictional needs in the novel.

#### THE BATAAN DEATH MARCH

Early in *Ceremony* Tayo and some of his fellow World War II veteran friends are sitting in a bar drinking. They pay for their drinks with "cash from disability checks earned with shrapnel in the neck at Wake Island or shell shock on Iwo Jima; rewards for surviving the Bataan Death March" (41). Silko mentions Wake Island and Iwo Jima again (42). Earlier she had told us that "Harley had been at Wake Island with Leroy Valdez and Emo" (20). We are not told about Pinkie's war assignment, so perhaps we are to assume that he was at Iwo Jima. "They had all come back with Purple Hearts" (20), Silko tells us, referring to the medals given to U.S. armed forces personnel wounded in action. Of these friends, only Tayo seems to have been at Bataan when it fell, and so was a survivor of the Bataan Death March and of one of the Japanese prison camps that awaited those American prisoners who survived the humiliating march.

The Bataan Death March took place in April 1942, not long after the United States entered the war. When the Allied commanders decided that they could not effectively fight the war simultaneously on both the European and the Pacific fronts, General MacArthur was ordered to abandon his American troops and their Filipino fellow soldiers in the Philippines. He left with his famous promise, "I shall return."<sup>5</sup> In leaving, he was forced to abandon 100,000 American and Filipino soldiers and civilians to inevitable capture by Japanese forces.<sup>6</sup> The Japanese stripped their prisoners of their weapons and forced them to march some eighty miles in the heat of the jungle sun to barbed wire camps to the north. Many of the American soldiers and even more of their Filipino comrades died on the weeklong trek north from the southern tip of the Bataan Peninsula of Luzon, which lies across the bay from Manila. Except for a handful who managed to escape, those who survived the march, the thirst, the hunger, and the jungle diseases associated with life in the Philippines spent the war in miserably substandard prison camps. Some

of these prisoners were shipped out to serve as slaves in Japanese factories outside the Philippines.

Tayo is one of what Silko calls “MacArthur’s boys” (42). He and Rocky are said to be stationed in the “Philippine jungle” (8, cf. 124) of “some nameless Pacific island” (7, cf. 198) and to have been forced on a long march guarded by their Japanese captors. In a series of events remarkably like those that actually happened on the Bataan peninsula, a grenade mortally wounds Tayo’s cousin Rocky. His body is abandoned in a ditch beside the road, while his fellow captives drag Tayo on toward the POW camp. To understand these events in *Ceremony*, we need to consider Silko’s most likely historical source of information for the events surrounding the Bataan Death March. I refer to *The Dyess Story*,<sup>7</sup> a book not before mentioned in connection with *Ceremony*.

### THE DYESS STORY

*The Dyess Story* is the first-person narrative of Col. William Edwin Dyess’s experiences in the Philippines. A U.S. fighter pilot, he was captured with many other men and marched—perhaps herded is a better term—to a series of prison camps, from one of which he eventually managed to escape. After his successful escape, Dyess returned to the United States, where he spent some time recuperating in a California hospital. Dyess himself was not a model for Tayo. There are too many differences: Dyess was white, Tayo half-Laguna; Dyess was a pilot, Tayo a lowly infantryman; Dyess escaped from Bataan, Tayo did not; Dyess died in a military training exercise as he prepared to ship out to the Pacific front again, Tayo survived the war and returned home; and so on. I see the Dyess story less as Silko’s source of information about Tayo himself than as Silko’s most likely source of information about the Bataan Death March.

It is difficult to imagine a stronger candidate for Silko’s historical source than *The Dyess Story*. While the war was still raging and while most of the survivors of the Bataan Death March were still imprisoned in Japanese POW camps, the Dyess narrative was published in serialized form in the *Chicago Tribune* and its 100 associated newspapers. It is estimated that in newspaper format the story reached a daily audience of 40 million readers. The first book version appeared in 1944,<sup>8</sup> and it has been reprinted several times since then. As the most famous account of the Bataan Death March, it was available in many libraries. Silko could easily have discovered it when she researched the historical background of Tayo’s wartime experiences before he returns to the Laguna Reservation at the start of *Ceremony*. Several details of the Dyess story made their way into Silko’s novel, but always with adaptations.

One of the key changes was the weather. According to Dyess, during most of the march, the weather is hot and dry, the sun murderously, unforgivingly, bright:

But even more terrible than the prison camp sufferings was the barbaric Death March from Bataan, an 85-mile trek from Mariveles, Bataan province, to San Fernando, Pampanga, under the merciless tropical sun. . . . I saw and experienced the infamous Japanese sun

cure, which can break a strong man. Thousands of American and Filipino war prisoners, mostly bareheaded, were forced at midday, when the tropical sun was at the zenith, to sit in its direct rays until the sturdiest of us thought we must give up and until hundreds of our sick and weakened comrades did give up to delirium and death. (Dyess 25)

Dyess seems to remember the dust with particular horror: "I saw the Japs plunge bayonets into malaria-stricken American and Filipino soldiers who were struggling to keep on their feet as they were herded down dusty roads that led to hell" (25); "The dust that enveloped Mariveles field was being stirred up by the wheels of trucks and gun carriages" (69); "Swirling chalky dust had whitened sweat-soaked beards, adding grotesquery to the scene" (71); "They stirred up clouds of blinding dust in which all shape and form were lost. . . . I was marching with head down and eyes squinted for the dual purpose of protecting myself as much as possible from the dust and glare" (73); "We had marched about a mile after the sun treatment when I stumbled over a man writhing in the hot dust of the road" (77).

Certainly, it also rained during the Bataan Death March. According to *The Dyess Story*, the rains begin at the end of the march, as the prisoners are about to reach their prison camp destinations: "The days that followed were much alike: a succession of jungle, swamp, mountains, swollen rivers, and rain" (Dyess 180; see also 87, 100, 106, 117, 163, 170). Dyess mentions a "long, muddy ditch" (Dyess 91). But, while Silko seems to have drawn on Dyess's account of the jungle rain on Bataan, especially in her reference to the "ditch running full of muddy water" (44), she ignores the hot, dry weather that precedes the rains. In *Ceremony*, the monsoon rains are so suffocating and harmful to Rocky that Tayo curses the rain:

Jungle rain had no beginning or end; . . . When Tayo prayed on the long muddy road to the prison camp, it was for dry air, dry as a hundred years squeezed out of yellow sand, air to dry out the oozing wounds of Rocky's leg, to let the torn flesh and broken bones breathe. . . . It was that rain which filled the tire ruts and made the mud so deep that the corporal began to slip and fall with his end of the muddy blanket that held Rocky. Tayo hated this unending rain. . . . The sound of the rain got louder, pounding on the leaves, splashing into the ruts; it splattered on his head, and the sound echoed inside his skull. It streamed down his face and neck like jungle flies with crawling feet. . . . He could smell the foaming flood water, stagnant and ripe with the rotting debris it carried past each village, sucking up their sewage, their waste, the dead animals. He tried to hold it back. . . . He damned the rain. (11-12)

In reality, however, most of the historical march was a hot, dry, and blazingly sunny trek in which the prisoners were infinitely more likely to die of thirst or choke on dust than to slip in the mud. Indeed, near the end of the march the prisoners, far from cursing the rain, were thrilled to have it: "About midnight

rain started falling. It was chilling, but it cleansed the filth from our stinging bodies and relieved the agony of parched dryness. . . . We were refreshed for a time” (Dyess 87).

Silko, then, clearly adapted the facts of the Bataan Death March to suit her own narrative purposes. She was writing, after all, not a factual account of the Bataan Death March, or even a historical novel, but a fictional story about Tayo, a young man who curses the rain that he thinks is killing his cousin, and who later concludes that his doing so caused the drought at Laguna. Silko took artistic license with the actual meteorological conditions in order to establish Tayo as a caring and responsible man who takes upon his own shoulders the guilt for the death of a brother whose death he did not cause and for a six-year drought that did not result from his actions. Part of Tayo’s healing process includes accepting his own innocence.

### PORTRAYAL OF THE JAPANESE

Because *The Dyess Story* was written while the war was still raging by a man who had just escaped a Japanese prison camp, it is highly critical of the Japanese. Dyess refers to the Japanese soldiers as “bloodthirsty devils” and “murdering Jap buzzards” whose “atrocities” are “barbaric” and “brutal” (Dyess 78, 83, 27, 25, 77). One of Silko’s most important changes is to tell Tayo’s story with much greater sympathy for the Japanese.

At the very start of *Ceremony*, Tayo remembers the time in the Philippines, before his capture, when he and Rocky and others in his unit were asked to murder some Japanese captives whose hands were held above their heads in surrender. The “sergeant told them to kill all the Japanese soldiers lined up in front of the cave” (7). That incident was probably suggested to Silko by one in *The Dyess Story*, in which, before the surrender, Dyess and his fellow soldiers rout a large group of Japanese soldiers and then slaughter them rather than take them captive. After an intense battle, Dyess writes,

We had a good view of the narrow beach, which was littered with bodies. Other Japs were running wildly up and down and plunging into the surf. We raked the beach and surf with machine gun fire, annihilating all who moved. Presently the waves were rolling in stained with blood and dotted with dead Japs. . . . It was an easy matter for our survivors to storm the remaining Japs and mop them up. We finished this task at noon, taking only one prisoner. He fled over the top of the cliff and into the arms of our men waiting there. We counted more than 600 Jap bodies in the jungle, in the ledge, and on the beach. (Dyess 43–45)

Was this a battle or a massacre? Perhaps there was a fine line between them in a combat situation, but it is interesting that the only prisoner taken was one who managed to escape.

In *Ceremony*, Silko portrays another massive killing of Japanese soldiers: “the sergeant told them [the American soldiers] to kill all the Japanese soldiers lined up in front of the cave, with their hands on their heads” (7). Tayo

disobeys the order to shoot the Japanese captives in part because he thinks one of them is his uncle Josiah. In an effort to convince him that the dead soldier is not really Josiah, Rocky forces Tayo to “look past the blood that was already dark like the jungle mud, with only flecks of bright red still shimmering in it” (8). That image of blood mixed with the mud might well have been suggested to Silko by a memorable incident in *The Dyess Story*, in which Dyess describes a Japanese soldier who, finding some Japanese yen in the pocket of an American air force captain, draws a sword and beheads the American. Dyess did not see the incident himself, but he quotes another American prisoner who did:

“The captain’s head seemed to jump off his shoulders. It hit the ground in front of him and went rolling crazily from side to side between the lines of prisoners. The body fell forward. I have seen wounds, but never such a gush of blood as this. The heart continued to pump for a few seconds and at each beat there was another great spurt of blood. The white dust around our feet was turned into crimson mud.” (Dyess 70–71)

What is most interesting about the striking image of bloody mud is that Silko reverses the situation. In Dyess’s account, the bloody mud was the result of the execution of an unarmed American prisoner by a Japanese soldier, whereas in Silko’s story it results from the execution of unarmed Japanese prisoners by American soldiers. Silko used the image, but transformed the context to lend some sympathy to the Japanese side. This kind of transformation is typical of the way Silko treats incidents she found in *The Dyess Story*. Two examples will further illustrate my point.

First, there are several incidents in the Dyess narrative that involve smashing heads with rifle butts. Dyess tells about the time he saw “laughing and yelling Jap soldiers lean from speeding trucks to smash their rifle butts against the heads of straggling prisoners” (Dyess 25; see also 80). Dyess also describes the time a Japanese soldier finds a small shaving mirror in the back of one of the small packs carried by one of the American prisoners. When he determines that it was made in Japan, he assumes that the soldier had taken it from a dead Japanese soldier:

The Jap stepped back, then lunged, driving his rifle butt into the American’s face. “Yaah!” he yelled, and lunged again. The Yank went down. The raging Jap stood over him, driving crushing blows to the face until the prisoner lay insensible. (Dyess 69)<sup>9</sup>

Elsewhere Dyess describes an incident involving an American soldier so thirsty that he begs a guard for water:

I heard a cry, followed by thudding blows at one side of the paddy. An American soldier so tortured by thirst that he could not sleep had asked a Jap guard for water. The Jap fell on him with his fist, then slugged him into insensibility with a rifle butt. (Dyess 79)



Silko softens the violence of this image in *Ceremony*. In the head-crushing scene, for instance, a certain tall Japanese soldier reminds Tayo of Willie Begay, a Navajo friend of his from the Albuquerque Indian School.<sup>10</sup> Unlike the Japanese soldiers in the Dyess narrative, this enemy soldier is kind. He is tired of the march, just as the American prisoners are. The tall soldier even helps pull to his feet the fallen corporal who is helping to carry the stretcher transporting Rocky. In *The Dyess Story* the Japanese soldiers shot or bayoneted any stragglers. When Tayo tries desperately to get the corporal to take his end of the stretcher again, the tall Japanese soldier “pushed Tayo away, not hard, but the way a small child would be pushed away by an older brother” (44).<sup>11</sup> Then the tall Japanese soldier “pulled the blanket over Rocky as if he were already dead, and then he jabbed the rifle butt into the muddy blanket” (44). In a sense, of course, this is a brutal act, but in the context of *Ceremony* it is an act of mercy. Indeed, it might even be that Rocky had already died. The corporal tells Tayo, “Your brother was already dead. I heard them say it. Jap talk for dead. He was already gone anyway. There was nothing anyone could do” (44). As Silko describes the scene, the *coup de grace* is delivered out of kindness, less to kill Rocky than to free the loyal brother Tayo so that the corporal can help him to get back on the march and not stay behind to die along with Rocky.<sup>12</sup> Thus, Silko transforms a scene of Japanese brutality into a scene in which we are led to feel some sympathy for the Japanese.<sup>13</sup>

A second example can be found in a scene reminiscent of Dyess’s description of the mutilation of a Filipino soldier in the Japanese prison camp (the Filipinos were American allies in World War II):

I saw that all eyes were directed toward an object hanging on a barbed wire fence that paralleled the road. It had been a Filipino soldier. The victim had been bayoneted. His abdomen was open. The bowels had been wrenched loose and were hanging like great grayish purple ropes along the strands of wire that supported his mutilated body. This was a Japanese object lesson, of course. But it carried terrible implications. The Japs apparently had wearied of mere shootings and simple bayonetings. These had served only to whet the barbaric appetite. (Dyess 90)

This horrid passage apparently inspired the climactic scene at the abandoned uranium mine in *Ceremony*, where Emo, Leroy, and Pinkie mutilate Harley to punish him for letting Tayo get away and to lure Tayo to come and help him.<sup>14</sup> Here is the way Silko describes it:

In the moonlight he could see Harley’s body hanging from the fence, where they had tangled it upright between strands of barbed wire. . . . It nauseated him to see Harley’s body jerking and twitching in the sagging barbed wire, with hands and knives so greedy for human flesh. (251)

Silko has again taken an incident from the Dyess narrative that shows the barbarism of the Japanese soldiers and quietly transformed it in *Ceremony* into a

scene illustrating the barbarism of returned American soldiers: vets like Emo and Pinkie and Leroy who have forgotten how to love their fellows and seek only for their own individual gain, glory, and witchery-inspired revenge. It is beyond the scope of this article to analyze in detail why Emo, Pinkie, and Leroy are dehumanized by their contact with the Japanese while Tayo is not. One difference is that Tayo is loved and feels love. He has had the loving guidance of Josiah before the war and a loving connection to Ts'eh after it. Another difference is that he has a different connection to the ancient Laguna myths and prophecies than the others have, and he undergoes the titular ceremony that purifies him and gives him a positive role to play in the history of the Laguna. Whereas Emo, Pinkie, and Leroy are destined to reenact the Ck'o'yo rituals that Betonie discusses in his story about the witches' conference, Tayo becomes the culture hero of the Lagunas. The novel suggests that the reconnection with Tayo's Laguna culture is necessary to his becoming whole again.

*The Dyess Story* is virulently anti-Japanese. Indeed, it could be nothing else, considering what Dyess had experienced and witnessed as a Japanese prisoner: the bayonetings, the beatings, wholesale killing of stragglers, the sickness, the lack of medicines, the starvation, the parching thirst, the unspeakable filth of the camps, the mass burials, and so on. My point is that Silko changed all of this to present a profoundly more sympathetic view of the Japanese. Silko's decision to have a Japanese woman help Tayo in the train station near the start of *Ceremony* helps set the tone for a sympathetic treatment of the Japanese. The other returned vets, Silko tells us early in *Ceremony*, routinely "damn[ed] those yellow Jap bastards" (43), and Emo even rattles a bag of teeth he claims he pulled from the corpse of a Japanese officer. Tayo, however, "doesn't hate the Japanese, not even the Japanese soldiers" (43).

Why did Silko want to show the Japanese in such a positive and sympathetic light? One obvious inference is that the Laguna and other Indian peoples of America are related culturally and ethnically to Asians, so by killing the Japanese the American Indian soldiers really were in a sense killing their own uncles. Tayo can scarcely understand why at the time, but he knows instinctively that it would be wrong for him to kill the Japanese captives. Betonie, the Navajo medicine man who helps to cure Tayo, understands. "The Japanese," Betonie tells Tayo, "It isn't surprising you saw [your uncle Josiah] with them. Thirty thousand years ago they were not strangers" (124).

The other answer is that Silko humanizes the Japanese because, like many Americans in the late 1970s when she was working on *Ceremony*, she felt growing sympathies for the North Vietnamese people who were being killed by American soldiers. Silko wanted Tayo and readers of his story to take a sympathetic view of America's earlier Asian antagonists whom "MacArthur's boys" were commanded to call enemy.

Silko, then, read *The Dyess Story*, but transformed the events of the Bataan Death March in ways that would provide motivation for Tayo's actions: for his refusal to murder Japanese captives and for his need to curse the rain that he saw as endangering his brother. She wanted us to see that in both World War II and the Vietnam War, American Indian soldiers were wrongly forced to kill their Asian brothers and uncles.

## NOTES

1. Leslie Marmon Silko, "Letter to James Wright," in *The Delicacy and Strength of Lace: Letters between Leslie Marmon Silko and James Wright*, ed. Anne Wright (St. Paul: Graywolf Press, 1986), 59–60.

2. Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony* (1977; New York: Penguin: 1986), 44. All of my quotations from *Ceremony*, hereafter referred to by parenthetical page numbers in the text, are from this readily available Penguin edition.

3. See "Robert Leslie Evans, a Real-Life Model for Tayo in *Ceremony*," 15–22 in this issue.

4. The story of Robert Leslie "Les" Evans's experience at Bataan is corroborated in a book by Yvonne Boisclair, *In the Shadow of the Rising Sun: The Story of Robert Davis, POW and D Battery 515th CAC, Orphan Unit of Bataan* (Bella Vista, CA: Clearwood, 1997). Davis describes Evans as "looking like Mr. America. We called him 'Squaw' just to hide the truth that we envied his looks. Squaw ran the 268<sup>th</sup> Radar Unit attached to us. With his watchful eagle eyes he could call out enemy planes long before we could detect them, small and mosquito-like, in our gun sights. Squaw had a good-natured way of taking it all in stride—the jungle, the hardships. He never complained; never batted an eye when we called him Squaw. He just grinned back" (56). Of course, Silko could not have consulted this account years earlier when she did her research on the Bataan Death March.

5. I suspect that the song "Y volveré" referred to on pages 6 and 97, meaning "I shall return," is a subtle reference to MacArthur's famous parting words.

6. I take the figure from Hampton Sides, *Ghost Soldiers: The Forgotten Epic Story of World War II's Most Dramatic Mission* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 57. This book is mostly about the behind-enemy-lines rescue in 1945 of some Bataan Death March survivors who were imprisoned in a camp at Cabanatuan. Tayo might have been one of these men, but Silko does not give us enough information to verify that possibility one way or the other.

7. The full title is *The Dyess Story: An Eye-Witness Account of the Death March from Bataan and the Narrative of Experiences in Japanese Prison Camps and of Eventual Escape*. Edited, and with an introduction by Charles Leavelle, *The Dyess Story* is a reprint of the series of stories that appeared in the *Chicago Tribune* in 1944. Copyrighted in 1944 by G. P. Putnam's Sons, it has appeared in several reprinted editions since then. My quotations, cited by page number parenthetically in the text, are from the Dogwood Press reprint (Woodville, TX, 1996). See also *Horrid Trek: A True Story of Bataan, the Death March, and Three and One-Half Years in Japanese Prison Camps*, by Robert W. Levering (Dayton: Horstman, 1948). Levering's account is far more distant from Silko's novel than is Dyess's.

8. See Leavelle's introduction to *The Dyess Story*, 11.

9. Dyess starts to sound a little like Emo after this incident: "I wanted to kill Japs for the pleasure of it" (Dyess 71). Emo grins as he brags, "We butchered every Jap we found. No Jap bastard was fit to take prisoner. We had all kinds of ways to get information out of them before they died. Cut off this, cut off these" (61).

10. An earlier reference in *Ceremony* to the manner of Rocky's death occurs when Tayo is cursing the rain. He is angry at the rain because he thinks the resulting mud will weaken the corporal who is helping him to carry Rocky's stretcher, and fears that "if they saw how weak Rocky had become, and came to crush his head with the butt

of a rifle, then it would be the rain and the green all around that killed him" (11). Tayo refuses to blame the Japanese for Rocky's death, but blames rather the "rain and the green."

11. The Japanese kindness toward struggling Americans would have seemed very strange to Dyess: "Those who fell were kicked aside by the Japs. The Japs forbade us to help these men. Those who tried it were kicked, slugged, or jabbed with bayonet points by the guards who stalked with us in twos and threes. For more than a mile these bomb-shocked cripples stumbled along with us. Their shoulders were bent and the sweat streamed from their faces. I can never forget the hopelessness in their eyes. Eventually their strength ebbed and they began falling back through the marching ranks. I don't know what became of them" (Dyess 75-76).

12. The scene is reminiscent of the scene where the Filipino named El Toro stays by his dying friend: "I saw a little Philippine scout who had been my runner during the action of Agoloma Bay. He was a powerfully built youngster and a real fighter. We called him 'El Toro'—The Bull. I asked him what he was doing. He pointed to a critically wounded man lying near-by. 'Sir,' he said, 'I stay with my wounded companion.' When we passed back that way Toro was still there, but his companion had died" (Dyess 67).

13. Silko mentions that the tall "Willie Begay" Japanese soldier later comes to the prison camp and, from a distance, looks at Tayo through the barbed wire to "stare for a long time in his direction" (44). Perhaps he was suggested by the Filipino in the Dyess narrative who made "secret signs of friendship and encouragement. I saw one man looking at us intently" (Dyess 142). Dyess occasionally suggests that the Japanese are not entirely inhuman. There is, for example, the Japanese lieutenant "who seemed to take a liking to me" (Dyess 118).

14. It is interesting to speculate that Silko might have taken the name "Leroy" from *The Dyess Story*. See page 111, where Dyess speaks of a young lieutenant named Leroy who helped to befuddle a Japanese military intelligence officer trying to pry information out of them.

