"We Are the Land": Ecoethical Discourse and Moral Imagination in the Writings of Scott Momaday and Leslie Marmon Silko

我們即土地: 莫馬戴與席爾柯作品中的生態倫理論述與道德想像

Yueh-Chen Chang*

(張 月 珍)

English Abstract

Traditional Native Americans deem their existence and identity formation inseparable from the land they reside in. They regard highly their close connection with landscape, and show deep respect for nature. Their reverence for the interdependent beings on earth also determines their cosmological and ecological views. However, under the colonization of European settlers, Native Americans were gradually removed from their own native lands, suffering a strong sense of dislocation and displacement. Even when contained in a reservation area, Native Americans must confront the encroachment of greedy white capitalists who envy and crave for the abundant natural resources in the area. Compelled, sometimes, by hunger and poverty to sell their lands and to accept the capitalist dumping of wastes on their lands, Native Americans endured a great pain of facing the alternation of their own cultural and physical landscapes. To construct the narrative of this collective racial memory, Native American writers choose to rely on the power of imagination they observe to contain in their verbal tradition. In this paper, I will draw upon N.Scott Momaday's House Made of Dawn and Leslie Marmon Silko's Ceremony to examine how imagination functions to foster the construction of narrative and promulgate ecological ethics in Native American texts. I will also explore how contemporary Native American writers confront the state of colonialism by addressing the ecological and ethical issues in terms of what Momaday calls "moral imagination."

---

*Assistant professor, Departmant of English, National Changhua University of Education.

我們即土地: 莫馬戴與席爾柯作品中的生態倫理論述與道德想像

"We Are the Land": Ecoethical Discourse and Moral Imagination in the Writings of Scott Momaday and Leslie Marmon Silko

張 月 珍*
(Yueh-Chen Chang)

中 文 摘 要

傳統美國原住民視其生存與屬性之建立與其所居住之土地間有著不可分割的關係。他們重視與四周景觀間保持的親密關係也極爲尊重自然。由此對大地中相互依存關係的敬重決定其生態與宇宙觀。然而，被歐洲移民殖民的經驗迫使原住民逐漸遠離其土地過著顛沛流離被錯置的痛苦。即使被圈豢於保留區中，原住民仍然逃不過覬覦其豐富自然資源的資本野心家的侵犯。在貧病交迫的困厄情境中，原住民常被迫出賣土地或接受廢棄物傾倒於保留區的現實並忍受景觀文化的改變。當代原住民作家選擇以蘊藏於族群口語傳統中的想像力量重建這樣的原住民集體族群記憶的敘述。本論文中將以席爾科的＜＜儀式＞＞及莫馬戴的＜＜日昇之屋＞＞爲例探討想像如何孕育敘事的建構及宣揚流布原住民文本中的生態倫理。同時亦探討當代原住民作家如何藉由莫馬戴所謂的道德想像的觀點陳述其生態倫理觀以迎抗殖民主義。

* 彰化師大英語系助理教授。

"We Are the Land": Ecoethical Discourse and Moral Imagination in the Writings of Scott Momaday and Leslie Marmon Silko
我們即土地: 莫馬戴與席爾柯作品中的生態倫理論述與道德想像

Yueh-Chen Chang
(張 月 珍)

"We are the land. . . . that is the fundamental idea that permeates American India life," writes Southwestern Laguna writer Paula Gunn Allen in her famous collection of essays on Native American culture and literature, *The Sacred Hoop*. In her "feminine" reading of landscape in Silko's *Ceremony,* Allen succinctly points out that key concept underpinning the cosmological philosophy of the Native American tribes is the notion that the land and the people are indivisible. According to her, the major difference that sets Native American concept of land apart from that of the Westerners is simply this idea that the land and the people are not separate entities. Unlike Westerners who tend to regard the earth as a separate provider of resources for human survival, the Native Americans, Allen notes, do not take the earth merely as a distanced nurturer of creatures on earth, but as a sentient being—"aware, palpable, intelligent, alive" (119). The idea that the earth is human makes Native Americans believe that the earth must also be engaged in lively human activities, and that human activities and existence should not be cut off or alienated from the earth. Because of this belief in human attachment to the earth, the people and the earth become indivisible "cocreators" (59).

The conviction that human and the earth maintain an active relationship is restated in another Southwestern Native American writer, Kiowa N.Scott Momaday. In his *The Man Made of Word,* Momaday ever writes:

> Very old in the Native American worldview is the conviction that the earth is vital, that there is a spiritual dimension to it, a dimension in which man rightly exists. It follows logically that there are *ethical imperatives* in this matter. I think. Inasmuch as I am in the land, it is appropriate that I should affirm myself in the spirit of the land. . . . In the natural order man invests himself in the landscape and at the same time incorporate the landscape into his own most fundamental experience. This trust is sacred (39, italic mine).

Like Allen, Momaday celebrates the dynamic, spirited, vigorous aspects of the

earth, insisting that humans live "in the spirit of the land." In another essay, "Native American Attitude to the Environment," Momaday elaborates that this "appropriation is primarily a matter of *imagination which is moral*, what we imagine ourselves to be" (qtd in Bartelt 20, italics original). In a sense, what Momaday accentuates is not only the imperatives of retaining an ethical attitude toward landscape, but the primary function of "imagination" in maintaining that propriety. That Momaday should address the issue of "environmental ethics" in terms of imagination does indicate the significant place that imagination can take in our exploration of moral relations between humans and the earth. In fact, what renders the mental faculty of imagination so valuable is that imagination assists the inhabitants of the land to develop a capacity to empathize with the land, compelling people to see the imperative of maintaining an equalitarian relationship with the land. Besides, with the work of imagination, inhabitants of the land are able to conceive their relations with the ancestors who live on the land before, and thereby establish an emotional tie with the land and the communal people. Due to this feeling for the land, inhabitants develop a love for the landscape and the environment, and find their aesthetic experience in nature form the basic principle on which they decide a right way to conduct themselves in nature.[1]

This moral judgement of human attitude toward the natural world based on aesthetic and imagination principles deviates Native American ecological thoughts from Western rationally-based thinking about nature. It, in the meanwhile, suggests to us that Western traditional conception of morality may be reshaped by this infusion of "imagination." In his *Moral Imagination: Implications of Cognitive Science for Ethics*, Mark Johnson, basing his "path-breaking" analysis of morality on the discoveries of cognitive science, contends that imagination must play a key factor in constructing and shaping our views of moral action, as well as self-understanding. He suggests that it is essential to know the imaginative structures of our moral understanding through such forms as narratives, conceptual metaphors and prototypes. Referring to Richard Rorty and Martha Nussbaum, two important moral philosophers who extend moral theory to the study of literature, Johnson argues for the power of narrative. He insists on the power of fictional narrative to make us "develop moral sensitivity," to "make subtle discriminations, and our empathy for others" (197). He says,

---

[1] In an interview with Charles Woodard, Momaday said that an aesthetic principle, by which he means the capacity to appreciate the beauty of nature, is the principle Native Americans hold in their preservation of the environment. He criticizes that it is wrong for Western people to be driven by an instrumentally-oriented thinking to exploit natural resources for economic value, an exploitation leading to the destruction of the earth. See Woodard, 70-1.

> Narrative makes it possible for us not only to explore the consequences of decisions and commitments over an extended period of time, but also to reflect on the concrete particularities that make up the fine texture of our actual moral experience. It invites us to develop our perception of character, of what is important in a given situation, and of the subtly interwoven threads of our moral entanglements (197).

The most important dimension of imagination, Johnson further contends, is the empathetic imagination, an imagination which is by no means 'private, personal or utterly subjective activity. Rather, it is the chief activity by which we are able to inhabit a more or less common world--a world of shared gestures, actions, perceptions, experiences, meanings, symbols, and narratives" (201). By virtue of our imaginative capacity to know fellow-feeling, and to inhabit the world of another, we will be able to envision "the potential help and harm that are likely to result from a given action" (202). Moral imagination, Johnson thus insists, is not a contradictory term; on the contrary, because of its emphasis on the imaginative nature of the morality, it "allows us both to experience present situations as significant and to transform them in light of our quest for well-being" (209).

To imagine morally is, Johnson suggests, an art, which involves aesthetic and affective dimensions. Johnson's thinking that ethical theory should not be construed within the confine of reason also correspond to the view held by ecofeminist philosophers, who argue to liberate moral understanding from Kantian framework of ethics derived from the reason/emotion dichotomy. In a challenge to the underpinning of dualistic thinking of man/woman, self/other, white/nonwhite, nature/culture, human/nonhuman, ecofeminist philosophers call attention to the affective aspects of morality. Val Plumwood, for instance, in her critique of environmental philosophy derived from rationalism, warns that if the "moral emotions are set aside as irrelevant or suspect, as merely subjective or personal, we can only base morality on the rules of abstract reason, on the justice and rights of the impersonal public sphere (158). Like Johnson, she contends that in our dealing with nature, what will distinguish us as moral being is our "capacity to care, to experience sympathy, understanding, and sensitivity to the situation and fate of particular others, and to take responsibility for others" (159). It stands clear that Plumwood's contention registers the significant place of the ethics of care, respect and responsibility in our dealing with beings on earth; it is an ethics based on emotions rather than reason. It is an ethics that allows people to discard the "highly ethnocentric" ethical concepts, which subordinate nature, women, and indigenous peoples. In her view, only by abandoning the rationalist-based morality can people start to appreciate an alternative ethical views upheld by indigenous peoples, "whose ethics of respect, care and responsibility for lands is often based on special relationships with particular areas of land via links to kin" (161).
This recognition of the conflation of ecofeminist philosophical views and traditional

Native American ecological concerns will certainly benefit us in our study of Native American literary works. It is because ecological discourses and ethics constitute salient features in Native American literature, but the study of this relation between Native American literature and nature has been bypassed.[2] In fact, it is not until the 1990s that indigenous cultures and writings start to receive increased attentions.[3] As the ecologically-minded indigenous people in America hold cosmological views rather different from those non-Native Americans, their ideas provides non-Natives with an alternative perspective to revision their place in the universe, and another analogy to re-describe their relations with nature.[4] Besides, American Indian belief that humans and nonhumans are interdependent beings of equal values not only challenges the Enlightenment assumptions about the duality between humans and nature, but also offers a ground for contemporary ecocritics to critique the environmental attitude and ethics derived from anthropocentricism. The metaphor of the web of independence, which is popularly held by the American Indian tribal people, for instance, is utilized to stir, in Lawrence Buell words, "the ethical force of the contemporary ecocentric critique of anthropocentricism" (284-5).

A similar extension of indigenous metaphor to the critique of Western ecological

---

[2] Although the study of nature writing has been one of the main subjects in American literary history, however, it is not until the 1990s when the study of literature and environment is conducted with a strong ecological consciousness that the study of "environmental imagination" in literature is turned a new leaf (Buell 1995). The publication of *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* in 1996 certainly facilitates the institutionalization of a new critical approach to the study of literature in relation to environment, and contributes to the enhancement of our ecological consciousness and sensibilities about the earth. The rise of the ecological feminist approach, which concentrates on the critique of the patriarchal concepts of the male domination over women, and human exploitation of natural resources, likewise opens a new door, helping us see the connection between woman and nature, feminism and environmentalism (Warren 1996).

[3] However, it can be noted that the increase of these attentions is attributed less to a recognition that tribal cultures are in danger of extinction as endangered species than to the fact that the ecological philosophy expressed in indigenous writings stands appealing to the non-indigenous people and writers. The emergence of the New Age movement in the North America, which draws inspiration from native spirituality reveals the needs of general people for spiritually uplifted lives while living on this spiritually and environmentally polluted planet.

[4] According to Native American critic, Paula Gunn Allen, American Indians have traditionally recognized the dynamics and circularity of beings in relations and perceive all beings of equal values in universe, whereas the Westerners tend to lean on opposition, binarism as the basic perception of cosmos. See her *Sacred Hoop*, p. 15.

thinking is also found in ecofeminist philosopher's critique of "mother nature" metaphor. However, a deep exploration into this utilization, extension and critique of indigenous metaphor reveals cultural differences. This is because despite the fact that ecofeminist philosophers propose to look at the alternative indigenous views about the earth, their critique runs amiss. Namely, although ecofeminist philosophers denounce conventional equation of nature with mother, challenging patriarchal notion of nature as submissive entity which passively allows the exploitation of the dominant males, their critique loses its force when applied to Native American concept of "mother earth." This is because patriarchy, as Native American (eco-) feminists contend, is traditionally a nonexistent system in their culture, so patriarchal view of nature is an unheard-of idea. Just as Paula Gunn Allen argues, in her traditional gynocracy culture the reproduction of life and nature is deemed highly as a manifestation of woman's power, so if any disruption of nature or the demarcation between man and woman should occur, it is merely a result of colonization.

This tendency to attribute natural and cultural degradations in Native American communities to colonization does not remain uncommon. Cherokee scholar, Andy Smith, in her critique of the inadequacy of ecofeminist study of the oppressive conceptual frameworks that dominate woman and nature, also calls for an attention to the "primary" oppression that subjugate the Native Americans--colonization. In her echoing of Allen's viewpoints, Smith proposes that ecofeminists take an anticolonial perspective to realize the real concerns of the Native Americans (22). "[T]he colonization of Native lands", she argues, is the key issue which should be "grappled with" and should be included in the exploration of oppression (22). Smith's indigenous standpoint does indicate the major trepidation, indignation and concern of both Native Americans and global indigenous people, who have been observing the destructive act of the dominant colonizers. Seeing the shrinking of their land, the dumping of nuclear waste, and the exploitation of the natural resources (water, oil, uranium, etc.) on their reservation areas, the indigenous people globally seek a common appeal for environmental justice. They mobilize social movements, striving to reclaim their land rights. They fight for the rights to preserve the natural resources on their land, and the rights to restore their traditional ceremonies on the sacred grounds. Hence the conventional emphasis on the indigenous values of harmonious relations and closeness with nature tend to romanticize the images of the indigenous as nature-loving, non-political people, ignoring the "politics of ecology" that is being heeded by today's indigenous people. In fact, without looking into the historical fact of colonialism, what epistemological ecocritics tend to ignore is the emotional outrages, resistance and psychic imbalance lurked inside the indigenous people as a result of political oppressions and ideological domination that have been imposed on their community. Without a consideration of the impacts colonialism exerts, there will be little understanding of their post-colonial psychological needs and political appeals-- their appeal for the land rights, their tenacious adherence to the traditional

concept of land ethics and their justification of their use of sacred land and earth based on their traditional ecological, moral and spiritual concepts.

Ecological discourse and moral imagination in the texts of Momaday and Silko

Traditionally Native Americans transmit their view of nature, ecology, and universe through oral narrative and communal storytelling. Listeners who participate in the oral activity not merely acquire ancestral wisdom but develop a right attitude to nature, animals and others. But it is with the aid of imagination that makes it possible for land, landscape, sacred places in the narratives to be situated in the participants what Momaday calls "racial memory" (39). For when people find that they can associate former categories of landscape images with the present experience through imagination, they find it meaningful to relate their memory to a place. Through recalling, they affirm not only their relation with the natural world but their sense of cultural identity. Apart from this, conceived from a postcolonial perspective, place in post-colonial societies, as Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin suggest, is "a palimpsests, a kind of parchment on which successive generations have inscribed and reinscribed the process of history" (392). To Native Americans in a (post-) colonial society, land as well as landscape carries paramount meanings because in natural landscape and sacred places contain so many valuable messages and information that they are constantly reinscribed in the memory of the tribal people. It is therefore not unusual for contemporary Native American writers to draw upon oral tradition to convey their thoughts about a right relation between humans and culture, and use natural landscape as a central reference point for their re-imagination of culture.

In fact, the act of reimagining human relations with nature and culture in a (post-) colonial Native American community in terms of ethics is often exhibited in the narratives of Native American writers like N.Scott Momaday, Leslie Marmon Silko, Louise Erdrich, Linda Hogan and James Welch.[5] But it is in the writings of Momaday

[5] In the writing of Chippewa writer, Louise Erdrich, similar valuation of land and landscape in 'imaginary' areas can be detected too. In her well-written essay, "Where I Ought to Be: A Writer's Sense of Place," Erdrich underscores the meaning of the "unchanging" landscape to Native American writers. She points out that Native American writers see the land as the core of culture, a reference point for identity, and never discard it even in the face of cultural loss and catastrophe. She writes, "we can escape gravity itself, and every semblance of geography, by moving into sheer space, and yet we cannot abandon our need for reference,

and Silko, two Southwestern Native American writers, that we can discern the striking examples of such concerns for ecology, ethics, imagination, and narrative. Like Momaday, who foregrounds the significance of the emergence place and the migration story to his Kiowa tribe in his *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, Silko, too, evaluates the meaning of this journey through the landscape in her essay on "Pueblo imagination." She writes:

> The narratives linked with prominent features of the landscape between Paguate and Laguna delineate the complexities of the relationship which human beings must maintain with the surrounding natural world if she hope to survive in this place. Thus the journey *was an interior process of the imagination*, a growing awareness that being human is somehow different from all other life—animal, plant, and inanimate. Yet we are all from the same source: the awareness never deteriorated into Cartesian duality, cutting off the human from the natural world. (273 italics mine)

Silko's remarks evince what Johnson terms "the cognitive process of moral imagination." From an empathetic imagination of the situation that all human beings spring from the same place, Native Americans come to realize that all beings are all united. And it is this sense of interrelatedness that keeps Native Americans from "deteriorating" into a Western dualistic demarcation of self and other, humans and animals, animates and inanimates.

Both Momaday and Silko perceive the value of memory, imagination and association for Southwestern people to recognize the "spiritual dimension" of the earth, to establish human emotional ties to the place, and thereby to construct cultural identity. But while Momaday, as Guillermo Bartelt argues, relies heavily on linguistic discourse to reconstruct native ideologies of the land (19), Silko lays more emphasis on the cross influences of stories, landscape and identity formation. In her view, physical landscape plays a particularly significant role in the shaping of identity, because landscape, like dream, possesses the power to "channel powerful *emotions* into rituals and narratives which reassure the individual while reaffirming cherished values of the groups" (38 italics mine). Landscape associated with stories, Silko suggests, exerts a tremendous psychological impact on the tribal people, so the abandonment of either one is unimaginable and unacceptable.

The central idea that landscape exerts psychological impacts and that impacts lead a person living in it to examine his behavior as well as his relation with nature and the land appears in Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn,* Silko's *Ceremony* and

identity or our pull to landscape that mirror our most intense feelings" (1).

Almanac of the Dead as well. Similarly set against scenes after World War II, both *House Made of Dawn* and *Ceremony* depict the post-traumatic syndrome of the Native American veterans returning to their communities. Both novels are marked by their Indianness, which is manifested not only in the emotions of the Indian characters but through the detailed portrayal of Southwestern landscape in which Native American live. *House Made of Dawn*, which was published in 1968 and ushered Native American literary writing into a new era, displays not only Momaday's observations on nature but his profound thoughts about intricate relationship between the land and the people living in it. The land (or put it more specifically, the landscape), as Mathias Schubnell notes, "manifests an active agent which exerts its power on the consciousness of both Indians and whites" (qtd in Bartelt 23). In *House Made of Dawn*, major characters live under the spell of natural landscape; darkness stalks in wilderness, menacing those who are not able to accept its presence in nature. Abel, the protagonist, found the sound in nature baffling, and was not able to appreciate the beauty and the meanings embodied in wilderness and still darkness. Either in childhood or in the war, he was dreaded and bewildered by the sound which was mysteriously present in the environment. In his childhood, the sound was associated with the voice of the witch; in the battlefield, the sound was mixed with the mutter of the machine tank that ran over the field. Both supernatural and unnatural forces pose psychological fear in him; namely, something eerie in nature disturbed him psychologically.

However, in Abel's mind, ironically what "awakened" him was not "machine" but the silence (24). He was not able to stand the silence in nature. Furthermore, his inability to tolerate the silence in nature was exacerbated by his inability to find a proper language to articulate his disturbed inner feelings. On returning from the battlefield to his own reservation, Abel found himself belonging to nowhere. He thought that

> [h]is return to the town had been a failure, for all his looking forward. He had tried in the days that followed to speak to his grandfather, but he could not say the things he wanted; he had tried to pray, to sing, to enter into the old rhythm of the tongue, but he was not longer attuned to it . . .[and as] [h]e was alone, and he wanted to make a song out of the colored canyon, the way the women of Torreon made songs upon their looms out of colored yarn, but he had not got the right words together". (*House* 58-9)

Critics may contend that Abel's killing of albino, an Indian whose pale

complexion made him mistaken for a white, is caused by Abel's inability to cope with the evil forces lurked in nature.[6] However, it seems more likely that it is this loss of linguistic, artistic and religious expressions that has cut Abel off from his people, his land, and his culture, weakening his imaginative and artistic ability to seek a connection with nature as well as culture.

Abel could not realize his connection with nature and animals until he recalled the initiation ritual he underwent with The Eagle Watchers Society when he was seventeen. Nor could he appreciate the beauty and balance of still darkness until he recalled a bear hunting trip he made when he was a young man. In his eagle-hunting ritual, Abel learned a compassionate manner to deal with the animal he was to hunt. In a bear hunting trip, he learned to wait patiently and piously for the emergence of bear in darkness. Stillness of the night was to him

> holy and profound; it was rest and restoration, the hunter's offering of death and the sad watch of the hunted, waiting somewhere away in the cold darkness and breathing easily of its life, brooding around at last to forgiveness and consent; the silence was essential to them both, and it lay out like a bond between them, ancient and inviolable. (*House* 201)

It is in fact this reverence for the hunting ritual that keeps Abel from violating the silent and precious bond between humans and the animals. Moreover, it is the appreciation for the "consent" of the bear to sacrifice its life for humans that intensifies his respect for this hunting act. This same reverence for animal sacrifice is also manifest in Silko's *Ceremony*.[7] In *Ceremony*, Tayo learned from his uncle that a

---

[6] One of the most puzzling and mysterious parts of the novel is apparently this scene of killing the albino by Abel. Critics argue that Abel is driven by an abstract idea of evil, an idea which equate evil with whiteness. For all this reading of Abel's failure to deal with nature, more critics, however, insist that Abel's insanity is a result of his disassociation from tribal culture and custom. See Helen Jaskoski, "Beauty Before Me: Notes on *House Made of Dawn*." p. 42, and John Konevich, "Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*." *Explicator* 60.4 (2002): 236.

[7] Silko's *Ceremony* published in 1977, under an apparent influence of Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*, clearly demonstrates the ecological consciousness and imagination of a serious Native American woman writer. Recognized by Lawrence Buell as "one of the major works in the contemporary American environmental fiction" (*The Environmental Imagination* 285), *Ceremony* depicts nature, land and landscape in so sophisticated manners that few can downplay or disregard the ecological views which traditional Laguna people hold toward the natural world.

sacrificial ritual must be held immediately after the killing of deer in order to appease the spirits of the slain animal and to show gratitude for the sacrifice. Because Laguna Pueblo people believe that humans are a part of nature and their existence is inseparable from other creatures in nature, all nonhuman entities and animals should be treated with equal respect. The moral message regarding the propriety of treating nature and inanimate being on earth is passed on through the mouth of the older generation like Tayo's uncle. The message discloses a belief in the "sacred" trust that should be maintained between Native Americans and nature. This understanding of appropriate behavior toward nature clearly exhibits what Momaday terms "a moral comprehension of the earth and air" (35).

Based on this understanding, *Ceremony,* furthermore, reflects the mutual influence of human behavior and climate. Set in New Mexico arid desert land, *Ceremony* portrays not only the psychological disturbance of Tayo but also the ecological abnormality of the region, which is thought to be caused by human disrespectfulness to nature. The novel reveals the effects of the weird climate on the beings living in the region; not only does the injurious drought leave the land dry, unproductive and barren, but people on the land become agitated, distracted and mentally deranged. Tayo became mentally disturbed because he believed that the drought that ravaged the Laguna reservation was caused by his cursing the jungle rain in Philippine. Tayo is perhaps, as some critics suggest, cast into a state of mental disturbance for lack of maternal nurturance from the land (Allen 119-123; Brice 129-131), yet it is more likely that his ethical view of human/nature relationship put him in a predicament. In other words, a sense of guilt and shame about his irreverence to nature drives him crazy.

It becomes apparent that in both Momady's and Silko's texts what is greatly emphasized is a reciprocal and interrelated bond between human and nature. As all things in universe are thought to be members of a related family, it is imperative for all things to maintain harmonious relationships so as to keep the universe in balance. Human intervention into nature is thus conceived by the Southwestern Indian people as both inappropriate and unwise, because the complex interrelationships sustained in nature are to influence, control, and determine the existences and destinies of both animate and nonanimate beings on earth. Any human intervention will yield nothing but devastating results. In Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*, the tank machine that ran through the land, and the car that "wound through the streets and into the tress at the mission" (26) represented such intrusion of the mechanical forces into the natural world, ravaging the land, destroying the peace of nature. They dominate human lives, and disturb the inner balance of people living in it as well. Hence, Abel found himself mentally disordered, after he made a narrow escape from the approaching tank in the battlefield, losing his ability to act sensibly in town because he was so haunted and hallucinated by the sound of "the machine."

Colonization, land loss, ecological crisis, and environmental apocalypse

To Native Americans, colonialism is the most obvious form of human intervention not only into nature but into their culture. European colonizers ravaged their land, which is of ultimate values on spiritual, ecological, moral and historical levels. As land is regarded as a vital being which cannot be possessed, exploited, consumed, or traded off as a private property, the loss of land means the loss of life energy, and the loss of identity. As Josiah in *Ceremony* forthrightly told Tayo the value of the land when he pointed to Tayo the springs and the canyon where the Pueblos were from: "You see . . . there are some things worth more than money. . . .This is where we come from, see. This sand, this stone, these trees, the vines, all the wildflowers. This earth keeps us going" (45). The sand, the stone, the tree and the vine constitute primary referents for Native people to know who they are and where they are from. This reliance on land composition to identify their history and location also appears in *House Made of Dawn,* where Abel must, too, under the guidance of his grandfather, "learn the whole contour of the black mesa" (197). "They must know it as they knew the shape of their hands, and always and by heart. . . . They must know the long journey of the sun on the black mesa, how it rode in the seasons and the years, and they must live according to the sun appearing, for only then could they reckon where they were, where all things were, in time" (197). The construction of this schematic knowledge about their position in the universe is of vital importance, because only through this knowing about their relative place and situation in the universe can Native Americans decide who they are and how to conduct themselves.

Both Momaday and Silko foreground in their novel this significance of constructing personal identity and codes of conduct through imagining and apprehending the dynamic interlocking influences that exist among the land, the universe and human activities. They see the value of constructing tribal identity through a sense of place; on the other hand, they also recognize how colonialism affects Native American attempts to define tribal identity in relation to landscape. It is because the encroachment of white colonizers not merely inflicts the ecological disaster but change the contour of their land. Their traditional view of land as inseparable from humans is challenged and shattered by the capitalist and instrumental thinking of the land as a measurable property. Their conventional attitude to preserve nature as part of human existence is questioned by greedy capitalists who regard the exploitation of natural resources as an ultimate means to accelerate human progress and prosperity. The lament for the loss of land, for the destruction of their living environment, and the desire to fight back their stolen land, to restore the ecological order existed before become major concerns in Silko's novels. Silko's *Ceremony* delineates the strenuous effort the Southwest Laguna Pueblos make in order to restore

a balanced relation with nature in the face of environmental damages that the dominant whites impose on their land. In *Ceremony* Silko gives a description of what Buell terms "environmental apocalypse," a pathetic revelation of environmental destruction caused by the white logging companies and hunters:

> The logging companies hired full-time hunters who fed entire logging camps, taking ten or fifteen deer each week and fifty wild turkeys in one month. The loggers shot the bears and mountain lions for sport. It was then the Laguna people understood that the land had been taken, because they couldn't stop these white people from coming to destroy the animals and the land. It was then too that the holy men at Laguna and Acoma warned the people that the balance of the world had been disturbed and the people could expect droughts and harder days to come. (*Ceremony* 186)

This feeling of environmental apocalypse provokes in Native Americans not only a sense of fear and helplessness but, more seriously, a strong sense of hatred. As Silko described Tayo's feelings: "He lay there and hated them. Not for what they wanted to do with him, but for what they did to the earth with their machines, and to the animals with their packs of dogs and their guns. It happened again and again, and the people had to watch, unable to save or to protect any of the things that were so important to them" (*Ceremony* 203).

To Silko, the question of how to deal with the rage against the ecological disaster inflicted on Native American land become another ethical problem to be grappled with. The issue involves the questions of how to respond morally to the oppressive white colonizers who both steal and destroy their lands. In *Ceremony*, Emo's fury is explosive and offensive. His resentment to the whites arises from a feeling that Native Americans have been unfairly deprived of the economic and social privileges after the whites taking their land. A representative of Native Americans who acted irrationally in the name of seeking land rights and justice, Emo expressed his rage outwardly in a revengeful and furious shout: "They took our land, they took everything! So let's get our hands on white women" (237). Yet, the wish he expressed to prosecute the weaker, disadvantaged women through violence demonstrated no efficaciousness but an inadequacy of moral reasoning, because the way he transferred anger to white women could only make the issues of nature, race, and gender complicated.[8] Actually such

[8] A similar inadequacy of moral reasoning recurs in the radical movement and demands of Native American ecoterrorists in Silko's second novel, *Almanac of the Dead* (1990). In this lengthy novel, Silko makes seeking land rights and justice the central appeal of the Native Americans; she articulates the anger and resistance the ecological activists around the globe bear against the white government.

anti-colonial anger leads him to nowhere but deeper sorrow, flinging him into a vicious circle of violence.

Colonialism indeed has affected the lifestyles and thinking of the Native Americans to such a great extent that their relation with nature is severely damaged. The feelings of being displaced and alienated from nature estrange Native Americans not only from the mainstream society but also from their own self. Abel in *House Made of Dawn,* for instance, found himself excluded and secluded, because he was not able to see the mountain as it stood for. "His vision," as Momaday described through the eye of Angela St. John, "had fallen short of the reality that mattered last and most" (37). Living in a dominant white capitalist society, Native Americans witnessed the ruins of their landscape as well as rituals by tourism. As Angela St. John described, no devoutness was left in the corn dancers at Cochiti; what remained was nothing but the "attitude of non-being" (37). The same existential problem is actually manifested in Abel, who was not able to see beyond the landscape to find freedom and spiritual redemption at the beginning of the novel.

If colonialism, as Allen and Smith, argues, has disrupted the harmonious relationship between Native Americans and nature, it follows that Native Americans are doomed to experience the sense of alienation, which modernists claims to be caused by the severance between the individual and nature. However, Native American writers and critics who refute this assumption argue that Western modernist concept of alienation fails to foresee the possible restoration of cultural self through communal ritual of storytelling (Norden 94-98; Landrum 764-770). They insist that an overemphasis on individual aesthetic experience in nature cannot resolve the problem of alienation that a modernist hero experiences. What is need is to recognize the role that culturally-defined ritual and narrative play to bring an individual beings to back to nature.[9]

It is perhaps true that culturally-defined ritual and narrative are essential to the restoration of individual sense of relation with community, nature and the universe; yet esthetic experience in nature is also of vital significance. Both Silko's Tayo and Momaday's Abel must go through a healing ceremony by running back into nature, basking themselves in the sun. Only in so doing can they reconstruct and redress their relationship with nature. Thus, after he completed his responsibility to care for his dying grandfather, Abel knows that he needs to participate in a running ritual, to be "a

[9] Scott Momaday, for instance, considers alienation a terrible idea, which will produce adverse consequence, and in "Ecological Restoration as Post-Colonial Ritual of Community in Three Native American Novels," Christopher Norden gives this suggestion.

dawn runner", so as to experience the ecstasy of being member of his tribe. From getting over physical pain, he discovered a renewal of spiritual life. In a like manner, Silko's Tayo must resituate himself in a sentient world to feel the pulse of the earth so as to realize the meaning of the ritual dance in his tribe: "He picked up a fragment of fallen plaster and drew dusty white stripes across the backs of his hands, the way ceremonial dancers sometimes did. . . . It was soothing to rub the dust over his hands; he rubbed it carefully across his light brown skin, the stark white gypsum dust making a spotted pattern, and then he knew why it was done by the dancers; it connected them to the earth" (*Ceremony* 104). But most importantly, it is in this aesthetic experience that he regains an emotional connection with the earth. Thereafter, every contact with the earth stirs in him a strong sensuous feeling of unification with the natural world, and that moving sensation furthermore prompts him to recall the stories that affirm his real identity: "The smell of clay and mountain sage stirred old memories. He touched a whitewashed wall as he went through a doorway, and rubbed the powdery clay between his fingers. His heart was beating fast, and his hands were damp with sweat" (*Ceremony* 178).

Only by experiencing an aesthetic rapture over this profound love for nature and ritual can Native Americans develop a more inclusive vision of the world, obliterating the line that divides self and other, making them more compassionate and less violent. Thus, during his healing journey through the landscape, Tayo can gradually come to identify, empathetically, with all the people who undergo severe sufferings from the nuclear bombing, whether in Japan or in Philippine. It is a "moral imagination" that we are all related that strengthens Tayo's weakened will to treat others more humanely, prompting him to give up using violence against Emo. In this sense, Tayo's moral imagination manifests the influence of the cosmological view that values fluidity and relationality. It is the kind of cosmological view that does not restrict one to a narrow thinking of nature and culture, or self and other. It is a more flexible cultural outlook held by old Native Americans like Betonie. A medicine man choosing to live on the hilltop, Betonie claims that he has witnessed the minimal occupation of the hill by the colonial white force, the loss of the Indian culture to commercial tourism and the shift of the Indian place into a 'city dump' (*Ceremony* 116-7). But unlike Emo or ecoterrorists who bear grudge and hatred against white colonizers, Betonie accepts cultural and physical changes as deplorably necessary and inevitable. His "liminal" position gives him a vantage point to deliberate on a more philosophical and moral question as to how to face the cultural transformation entailed by colonialism. His geniality is a clear manifestation of the fluid Laguna cosmological view, which Allen describes as 'perceiv[ing] things, not as inert, but as viable and alive, and . . . know[ing] that living things as subject to process of growth and changes as a necessary component of their aliveness" (15). By accepting the dynamic changes in universe as natural outgrowth, Native Americans become more optimistic, humble and inclusive.

Conclusion

The ethics of care, responsibility and respect, ecofeminist philosopher Plumwood suggests, "should have a more significant place in ethics at the expense of abstract, malestream concepts from the public sphere such as right and justice" (161). What Silko demonstrates in *Ceremony* is exactly that ethical value of care, responsibility and respect. By contrasting Tayo with Emo, a discontented Indian whose macho-like demand for justice and right makes him act irrationally and violently, Silko puts forward the qualities of care, responsibility and respect displayed in Tayo. Thus, while environmental ethicists grope for answers to the question of how we can act morally toward nature, both Momaday and Silko have tried to provide a moral "comprehension of the earth and air" in their essays and novels. It seems that they both have realized that Native Americans must acquire moral behaviors to deal with ecology, nature, animals, other human beings and their individual self through the discourses contained in the narratives, so they make their fictional narratives ecologically ethical. Both writers see narratives as vehicle to celebrate Native American sense of place, and ethical value of nature. Their awareness of colonial impacts on their culture and environment makes them accentuate the role of moral imagination in constructing and affirming their relation with nature and culture.

Works Cited

Allen, Paula Gunn. "The Feminine Landscape of Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*." In *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Tradition*. Paula Gunn Allen. Boston: Beacon P, 1986. 118-126.

---. "The Sacred Hoop: A Contemporary Perspective." In *The Sacred Hoop*. 54-75.

Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, eds. *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. London and New York: Routledge, 1995.

Bartelt, Guillermo. "American Indian Geopiety in Scott Momaday's Discourse of the Moral Landscape." *Language and Literature* 23 (1998): 19-31.

Brice, Jennifer. "Earth as Mother, Mother as Other in Novels by Silko and Hogan." *Critique* 39.2 (Winter 1998): 127-39.

Buell, Lawrence. *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1995.

Erdrich, Louise. *Tracks*. New York, N.Y.: HarperFlamingo, 1988.

---. "Where I Ought to Be: A Writer's Sense of Place." *New York times Book Review*. July 28, 1985. 1-2.

Glofelty, Cheryll, and Harold Fromm, eds. *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmark in Literary Ecology*. Athens: U of Georgia Press, 1996.

Landrum, Larry. "The Shattered Modernism of Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*." *MFS* 42.4 (Winter 1996): 763-786.

Johnson, Mark. *Moral Imagination: Implications of Cognitive Science for Ethics*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1993.

Momaday, N. Scott. *The Man Made of Words: Essays, Stories, Passages*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1997.

---. *House Made of Dawn*. New York: Harper and Row, 1968.

---. *The Way to Rainy Mountain*. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 1969.

Newton, Adam Zachary. *Narrative Ethics*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 1995.

Norden, Christopher. "Ecological Restoration as Post-Colonial Ritual of Community in Three Native American Novels." *SAIL* 6.4 (Winter 1994): 94-106.

O'Meara, Bridget. "The Ecological Politics of Leslie Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*." *Wicazo Sa Review* 152. (2000): 63-73.

Plumwood, Val. "Nature, Self, and Gender: Feminism, Environmental Philosophy, and the Critique of Rationalism." In *Ecological Feminist Philosophies*. Ed. Karen Warren. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1996. 155-180.

Scarberry-Garcia, Susan. *Landmark of Healing*. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 1990.

Silko, Leslie Marmon. *Ceremony*. New York: Viking, 1977.

---. *Almanac of the Dead*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991.

---. "Landscape, History, and Pueblo Imagination." In *The Ecocriticism Reader*. 264-281.

Smith, Andy. "Ecofeminism through an Anticolonial Framework." In *Ecofeminsim: Women, Culture, Nature*. Ed. Karen J. Warren. Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 1997. 21-37.

Warren, Karen J, ed. *Ecological Feminism*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

---, ed. *Ecological Feminist Philosophies*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1996.

Woodard, Charles L. *Ancestral Voice: Conversations with N. Scott Momaday*. Lincoln and London: U of Nebraska P, 1989.