PHENOMENOLOGY OF ALIENATION AND ECO-ETHICS: A STUDY OF N. SCOTT MOMADAY, LESLIE MARMON SILKO, TEMSULA AO AND EASTERINE KIRE

(Thesis submitted to Nagaland University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English)

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2018

DECLARATION

I, Ms. Emisenla Jamir, hereby declare that the subject matter of my thesis entitled *Phenomenology of Alienation and Eco-ethics: A Study of N. Scott Momaday, Leslie Marmon Silko, Temsula Ao and Easterine Kire* is the bonafide record of work done by me under the supervision of Prof. Nigamananda Das and that the content of the thesis did not form the basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the dissertation has not been submitted by me for any other research degree, fellowship, associateship, etc. in any other university or institute. This is being submitted to the Nagaland University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled *Phenomenology of Alienation and Eco-ethics: A Study of N. Scott Momaday, Leslie Marmon Silko, Temsula Ao and Easterine Kire* is the bonafide record of research work done by Ms. Emisenla Jamir, Regn No.: 573/2014 (w.e.f. 05/05/2014), Department of English, Nagaland University, Kohima Campus, Meriema during 2014-2018. Submitted to the Nagaland University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English, this thesis has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship or other title and that the thesis represents independent and original work on the part of the candidate under my supervision. This is again certified that the research has been undertaken as per UGC Regulations May 2016 (amended) and the candidate has fulfilled the criteria mentioned in the University Ordinances for submission of the thesis.

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Acknowledgement

The development of this thesis could not have been possible without the help, support and guidance of many individuals who have extended their service during the preparation and completion of this thesis.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to my supervisor, Prof. Nigamananda Das, for his infinite patience in helping me develop this thesis. His knowledge and guidance have been invaluable. A scholar could not have wished for a better supervisor.

I would like to thank Dr. Easterine Kire for always being available to answer questions regarding her works and helping me to explore beyond my original intention.

I would also like to thank the faculty and staff of the Department of English, Nagaland University, for their counsel and supervision.

I am grateful to my family and friends for their constant encouragement and support.

Above all, I am eternally grateful to the Almighty God for his love and wisdom.

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The increasing concerns regarding environmental degradation and rapid depletion of natural resources have given rise to an interest in environmental studies. Man's participation in the destruction of the natural world in the name of progress has created a shift in the ecological balance that threatens his very existence. Man's position is such that he is bound within the physical world within which he resides. In creating an imbalance, he jeopardises the world of which he is a part. An overhauling of the entire thought process that drives man towards the mindless destruction of nature is sought through various ecocritical studies. The relationship between man and nature is analysed and re-negotiated so as to engage in a dialogue that will eventually help understand and create strides towards the conservation of nature. This thesis seeks to evaluate the works of four writers, namely N. Scott Momaday, Leslie Marmon Silko, Temsula Ao and Easterine Kire. Momaday and Silko are Native American writers, while Ao and Kire are Naga writers. The natural world plays an integral part of both Native American and Naga communities and as such, their engagement with nature is evidenced in their writings. Using the theories of eco-criticism and alienation, it is hoped that further insight into their work is developed so as to bring about an awareness of the importance of nature in communities that have their foundations in oral tradition.

The first chapter of the thesis begins with an introduction of phenomenological theory, followed by theories on ecocriticism and alienation. An overview of Native American and Naga history concludes the chapter. Chapter II and

Chapter III looks into the works of Native American writers, N. Scott Momaday and Leslie Marmon Silko while Chapter IV and V focus on Naga writers Temsula Ao and Easterine Kire, respectively. The final chapter addresses the presence of alienation and ecological consciousness in the works of Native American and Naga writers and explores the possibility of further studies in understanding the relationship between man and nature within a place that is increasingly threatened with the collapse of the environment.

1.1 Phenomenology

Phenomenology is the name of a particular tradition in 20th-century philosophy. The term "phenomenology" has been in common use in philosophy in the works of Kant, Lambert and Hegel, but it was the publication of Edmund Husserl's *Logical Investigations* (1901), that laid the foundations for phenomenology as is used in the present day**.** According to Robert Sokolowski, "Phenomenology is the study of human experience and of the ways things present themselves to us in and through such experience" (2). The term phenomenology is derived from the Greek words, "phenomena", meaning 'things appearing' and "logos", meaning 'knowledge' ("Phenomenology"). M.A.R. Habib explains that the task of phenomenology is "to examine not the world of objects "in itself" but how this world is constituted by a vast range of acts of consciousness" (57-58).

Husserl's philosophy of phenomenology began with the process of rejecting 'psychologism' which viewed that "logic must be founded upon psychology" (Crowell 35). It followed "the doctrines of 'naturalism' and 'objectivism', according to which only the physical is real" (Zeitlin 14). He rejected this theory on the basis that it excluded consciousness and meaning. Husserl's phenomenology shies away

from the "external" world of objects and moves "towards examining the ways in which these objects appear to the human subject, and the subjective contribution to this process of appearing" (Habib 56). His concept of phenomenology, however, underwent certain changes and developed further in the hands of philosophers such as Martin Heidegger, Merleau Ponty and Hans-Georg Gadamer. Heidegger moved away from Husserl's focus on consciousness and focussed on the "structure of everyday being-in-the-world" (Dreyfus and Wrathall 3). He moved away from Husserl's 'transcendental phenomenology' which focussed on human consciousness and into 'hermeneutical phenomenology' which based itself upon questions of historical interpretations (Eagleton 57). Since its inception, phenomenology has undergone various changes and branched in various schools of thought. Hence, it might be appropriate to speak of 'phenomenologies' (plural) instead of the singular 'phenomenology' (Gallagher 10). While there are many branches of phenomenology, the following paragraphs look into a few select branches of phenomenology, namely, Transcendental Phenomenology, Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Existential Phenomenology.

1.1.1 Transcendental Phenomenology

Transcendental Phenomenology is the name given to the branch of phenomenology that follows Husserl's notion of consciousness. As mentioned earlier, Husserl rejected psychologism on the basis that it excluded consciousness and meaning. He explains that "all consciousness is intentional", that our very act of perceiving an object is intentional (119). The mind is always seen to be conscious 'of', 'about' or 'for' something. Husserl termed this projection of our consciousness towards the said object as, 'the intentional object of consciousness'. He borrowed this idea of intentionality from Franz Brentano which can often be misconstrued for

meaning ‘deliberate’ or ‘purposeful’. According to Sarah Bakewell, Brentano used the word ‘intention’ in order to mean “a general reaching or stretching, from the Latin root *in-tend*, meaning to stretch towards or into something” (44). The usage of the word “intention” in phenomenology, thus, applies to the “conscious relationship we have to an object” (Sokolowski 8). Whether the intentional object of consciousness is real or not, we can be certain of our experiences. Objects, therefore, can be regarded not as things in themselves, but as things posited, or ‘intended’, by consciousness (Eagleton 48). In order to do this, one should put away or bracket the external world reducing it to the contents of our consciousness alone. As stated by Bakewell, “This ‘setting aside’ or ‘bracketing out’ of speculative add-ons Husserl called *epoché* – a term borrowed from the ancient Sceptics, who used it to mean a general suspension of judgement about the world” (41). While Husserl does not deny the importance of the actual world, it is ‘bracketed’ for phenomenological purposes, leaving only the experience of the subject and the *content* of the intentional acts of consciousness to be studied **(**Frede 52). By doing this, focus is kept on the consciousness alone which is the central theme of Husserl’s thesis. Following *epoché*, Husserl moves on to what he describes as the ‘eidetic reduction.’ Having temporarily ‘bracketed’ away or suspended one’s judgement of the world, the phenomenologist delves into the essence of the object. According to Dagfinn Føllesdal, “The *eidetic reduction* is the transition from the *natural* attitude, where we are directed toward particular material objects, to the *eidetic* attitude, where we are directed towards essences” (110). The examination of the objects leads one towards an understanding of their essence. Transcendental reduction, then, takes place when the act, rather than the object, is reflected upon. As elucidated by Føllesdal, “The *transcendental reduction* is this change of focus, from our object-directed attitude to

an act-directed attitude" (111). Husserl referred to these acts of reductions as phenomenological reduction. His theory of phenomenology sought to transcend one's experience and in the process achieve a state of 'pure consciousness.'

According to Eagleton, phenomenological criticism in literature brackets the historical context of the literary works, along with that of the author and focuses "at a wholly 'immanent' reading of the text, totally unaffected by anything outside it" (51). Husserl's phenomenological criticism focuses upon the way an author experiences time and space, on the relation between self and others or his perception of material objects (ibid.).

1.1.2. Hermeneutical Phenomenology

Alongside Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger played a major role in furthering the phenomenological movement. Though once a protégé of Husserl, Heidegger soon developed his own theory of phenomenology. The publication of his work, *Being and Time* (1927) placed him as one of the central figures in the Phenomenological movement. Heidegger moved away from Husserl's Transcendental Phenomenology and focussed, instead, on the question of 'Being' (*Sein*), which he stated, was forgotten by Philosophy. To question this notion of 'Being', requires a questioner, for which he uses the term *Dasein*, meaning 'Being-there'. According to Gerald L. Bruns

> Heidegger's word for us in *Being and Time* is *Dasein*, "Being-there," which does not mean we ourselves but rather where we find ourselves. Against the subjectivist tradition of picturing an individual as an ego or self, a thinking subject or transcendental unity of apperception, a mind or a consciousness, Heidegger characterizes us in terms of our

> historicality and belongingness, our situatedness, our finitude or temporality. We are historicized beings. (373)

Timothy Clarke writes that, "against the traditional metaphysical drive towards a timeless perspective, a view from nowhere, Heidegger's thinking is based on an acceptance of human finitude" (*Martin Heidegger* 37*)*. Because we are of the world and our experiences take place in the world, Heidegger rejects Husserl's process of 'bracketing'. He uses the term 'facticity' or 'thrown-ness' to describe Dasein's involvement with the world. This involvement paves the way for the Dasein towards an inquiry into the meaning of 'being', thereby, allowing it to understand and realise itself. According to Jeff Malpas, "Dasein is constituted in a way that is essentially temporal – time provides the horizon within which Dasein understands itself, as well as its world, and so time is the horizon within which things are disclosed or brought to presence" (154). On the other hand, our knowledge of ourselves as finite beings allows us to reflect on this notion of 'being'. To quote Malpas:

> It is thus only in the face of the certain possibility of death that the unity and "own-ness" of our lives is established and that the world, and the things within it, are opened up to us. The meaning of being is thus to be found in the structure of our own finite temporality according to which our being-in-the-world is seen ultimately to be grounded in our being-toward-death (ibid.).

Heidegger described his philosophy as the 'hermeneutic of Being', the word hermeneutic, meaning the science of interpretation. According to Heidegger, human beings are essentially historical because "they are born into an environment already formed by multiple layers of interpretation and tradition, even down to the most seemingly immediate sense of things and of the 'I' that perceives and thinks them"

(Clarke 27). History, for Heidegger, meant the alteration and establishment of fundamental ways of thinking and being. He traced the present fundamental form of thinking, "the technical and objectifying modes of knowledge" back to the translation of classical Greek philosophy into Roman Latin, which erased the more primordial and reverential form of existence. This, according to Heidegger, culminated in the present globalized, technological civilization which he saw as a threat to the very essence of humanity (30). Following this crucial shift in history, was the spread of Christianity which saw God as creator and nature as his product. This creator-product notion is still evidenced in the present relationship between man and nature. It is this conception of the 'history of being' that serves as the context for all of Heidegger's thinking about art and the poetic (39). The question of 'being', however, fell short as Heidegger was unable to complete it. It, however, served as a forerunner towards the movement now known as existentialism.

1.1.3. Existential Phenomenology

The term 'existential phenomenology' came to use in the late 1950s and early 1960's. It came about as "a way of designating what was common to the thought of Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty and the philosophers influenced by them" (Wrathall 31). According to the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Hannah Arendt is arguably the first existential phenomenologist (Embree). The existential phenomenologists rejected Husserl's idealism and focussed on human existence. Existential phenomenology is descriptive in nature. It describes the meaning of being and the role of the lived body in experience (ibid.). Thus, to merely describe the phenomena without experiencing it is of no use. Since existential phenomenology comprises of a conglomeration of the thoughts of a number of philosophers, the

following definitions have been put forth in order to gather a general understanding of the term.

According to the *Encyclopedia of Phenomenology*:

> 'existential phenomenology' can be seen to be the name for a tendency of thought, developed very differently by different hands, in which phenomenology is to be freed from idealism and focused on human existence and, within that new ontological commitment, provided with a conceptual framework to give its descriptions fresh revealing power and adequacy. (Compton 206)

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy describes existential phenomenology as a phenomenology that "studies concrete human existence, including our experience of free choice or action in concrete situations" (D. Smith).

As far as literature and literary theory are concerned, the phenomenologist's critical approach involves an entry to an investigation of the underlying nature and essence of a work of literature under scrutiny and thus a kind of access to the author's consciousness ("Phenomenology"). Natanson explains that the task of literature and philosophy is to reconstruct the mundane experience by illuminating "the transcendental structure of common-sense experience" (86). Since phenomenology is a philosophy of experience, the ultimate source of all meaning and value is the lived experience of human beings. Both the Native Americans and Naga writers examined in the thesis occupy a space that moves away from the western linear worldview and into the tribal notion of time and space. As described by Armstrong:

> The task of the philosopher, according to phenomenology, is to describe the structure of experience, in particular consciousness, the imagination, relations with other persons, and the situatedness of the

> human subject in society and history. Phenomenological theories of literature regard works of art as mediators between the consciousness of the author and the reader or as attempts to disclose aspects of the being of humans and their worlds. (562)

In the light of this statement, then, the ensuing chapters look into the lived experience of the authors and their navigation towards understanding and interpreting a world that is inextricably linked with the idea of existence.

1.2 Alienation

Beginning from the moment of its conception to the present day, the term "alienation" has permeated into the consciousness of the modern day world so copiously that its usage is generally understood to mean being distanced or estranged from something or someone. However, when it comes to application, the term "alienation" cannot be assigned one fixed meaning. It is used in different contexts, for different purposes and thereby it becomes impossible to affix a single authoritative concept of alienation. Peter C. Ludz elaborates on this in his essay, "Alienation as a Concept in the Social Sciences". He explains how alienation can be understood in three different ways. Firstly, in the legal sphere, alienation is used to describe the connection with the transfer and sale of rights and property. Secondly, in the societal sphere, it refers to the individual's separation from other men, country or gods, and finally, in the medico-psychological sphere, alienation is used to mean the derangement of mental faculties (5). The word 'alienation' is derived from the Latin word "*alienatio"* which means to 'make estranged' ("Alienate"). The French usage of the term 'Aliénation' is similar to the English usage of Alienation. While there are several conflicts regarding the German word *Entfremdung,* meaning estrangement or

alienation and *Entäusserung*, meaning alienation (of property), relinquishment or externalization; the core meaning more or less remains the same. As corroborated by Lukacs, "In themselves, there is nothing novel about the terms Entausserung and Entfremdung. They are simply German translations of the English word 'alienation'" (333). Several attempts have been made to define the term 'alienation'. According to Allen W. Wood, "Alienation' is a prominent term in twentieth century social theory and social criticism, referring to any of various social or psychological evils which are characterized by a harmful separation, disruption or fragmentation which sunders things that properly belong together" (12). Erich Fromm defines alienation as:

> a mode of experience in which the person experiences himself as an alien. He has become, one might say, estranged from himself. He does not experience himself as the center of his world, as the creator of his own acts—but his acts and their consequences have become his masters, whom he obeys, or whom he may even worship. The alienated person is out of touch with himself as he is out of touch with any other person. (117)

The concept of alienation can be seen dating back to the Judeo-Christian theology explaining the fall of man and thus alienating him from God. Thus, "the messianic mission consists in rescuing man from this state of self-alienation which he had brought upon himself" (Meszaros). Nasir Khan counters this idea by stating that long before the Biblical notion of alienation, a theory of alienation can be found in Empedocles, the ancient Greek philosopher and scientist, "whose idea of man's fall from the Golden Age and the cyclical historical development leading to his repossession of the original state are of some conceptual significance" (27). This idea was adopted by Seneca, who glorified man's relation with nature and explained the

emergence of social institutions as a result of man's estrangement from his natural world. Philosophers like Locke, Rousseau and Hegel who played a major role in influencing Karl Marx, were in turn influenced by Seneca's glorification of the primordial state (ibid).

The idea of alienation as a philosophical concept first took shape in the work of G.W.F. Hegel (Ludz 7-8). However, it was Karl Marx and his theories of alienation that firmly entrenched the usage of the term in the contemporary world. The Marxian theory of alienation was one of his earlier writings and opinions are often divided between the works of Old Marx with that of the recent discovery of his earlier writings, generally attributed to the Young Marx. The complete edition of *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy* was first published in 1927 while the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* and the *German Ideology* were published in 1933. His theory of alienation was directed more towards the workers working in a capitalist society and the effect produced as a result of their detachment with their self. According to Marx, alienation can be seen as having four basic components: the product of work, the act of producing, the human species and the fellow man (9). Firstly, in a capitalist system, since the mode of production belongs to the capitalist, it becomes necessary for the workers to follow the set system. As a result, they have little control over the products. Moreover, the product does not belong to the workers and hence, they are unable to enjoy the fruits of their labour. This produces a sense of separation between the worker and the product he/she creates. Secondly, the workers in a capitalist society become alienated by their very act of producing. In a vast capitalist enterprise, the worker becomes a mere cog in the functioning of the system. Having no connection with the productive activity, the worker thus becomes alienated. Ritzer observes that "instead of being a process that

is satisfying in and of itself, productive activity in capitalism is reduced, Marx argued, to an often boring and stultifying means to the fulfilment of the only end that really matters in capitalism—earning enough money to survive" (55). As a result of the inability to connect with the product and his work, man becomes alienated from himself. He begins to look upon himself as a mere automaton and in the process, loses his humanness. This self-alienation ultimately leads man away from his fellow-beings. "Alienation is thus for Marx a total phenomenon comprising the entire human condition" (Ludz 10). Taking the impetus from Marx, various scholars have attempted to develop a compact theory of alienation. Melvin Seeman, in his essay "The Meaning of Alienation", provides five meanings for alienation: powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, social isolation and self-estrangement. Powerlessness is given to mean the inability to control one's destiny; meaninglessness refers to "the lack of meaning or lack of any consistent meaning in the action, work, etc., man is involved in" (Khan 24); normlessness is seen as a "state of bewilderment about what norms are applicable in unforeseen situations." Khan puts it simply as, "the pressure on the individual to adopt illegitimate means to achieve the cultural defined goals he has set himself" (ibid.). Social isolation is the feeling of isolation from social relations while self-estrangement is understood that the individual is out of touch with himself; "an inability to identify where one's true interests lie" (Kalekin-Fishman and Langman 4). Seeman's theory, with regard to alienation, have served to be a 'guideline' for most of the social scientists since the article's first publication in 1959. This attempt at a definitive guide to theorizing alienation, have however met with rejections from certain scholars who state that Seeman's theory has more to do with assigning different meanings to the term "alienation", than finding actual relations between the variants (Ludz 22). Theorizing alienation thus becomes difficult

because of its diverse applications. Since there is no one fixed formula with which to apply the alienation theory, it becomes necessary to adopt both the Marxist (neo-Marxist and revisionist) and the empirico-analytical usages, as suggested by Peter C. Ludz (24).

In the philosophical world, alienation is part of the existentialist dilemma. While Marx focussed primarily on the socio-political sphere, concerning the working class people, theologians and philosophers like Soren Kierkegaard and Nietzsche were focussing on the meaning of existence pertaining to man. Both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche contributed greatly to the existentialist movement which was followed by thinkers like Heidegger, Sartre, Marcuse and Camus. Soren Kierkegaard, regarded as the father of modern existentialist philosophy directed the existentialist problem within the framework of Christianity. Nietzsche, on the other hand, developed an atheistic theory of existentialism which was later taken up and developed by Jean-Paul Sartre.

In *Alienation*, Rahel Jaeggi presents two traditions on the concept of alienation. For Marx and his followers, alienation is "a disruption in human beings' appropriation of their species powers due to the structure, especially the economic structure, of their societies" whereas; the existentialist tradition of Kierkegaard and Heidegger understands alienation in terms of "the increasing impossibility of returning from the universal into self-chosen, authentic individuality" (ix). In both these cases, Rahel Jaeggi presents the core idea of alienation, that being, "alienation is a relation of relationlessness" (1). She explains that alienation is not the absence of the relation, but is itself a relation, even if the relation is a deficient one. Furthermore, "overcoming alienation does not mean returning to an undifferentiated state of oneness with oneself and the world; it too is a relation: a *relation of appropriation*"

(ibid). The thesis thus developed applies Jaeggi's notion of alienation in the works of the selected writers whose works are closely pre-occupied with the notion of self and the relation or relationlessness with the world in which they are situated in.

1.3 Ecocriticism

Ecocriticism is described as "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (Glotfelty xviii). The term was first used by William Rueckert in 1978, in his essay "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism", but it was only in the early 90s that the term began to gain momentum (Kerridge 531). It developed rapidly in the United States through the revisitation into the works of nature writers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller and Henry David Thoreau (Barry, 240). According to Richard Kerridge:

> Ecocriticism is literary and cultural criticism from an environmentalist view point. Texts are evaluated in terms of their environmentally harmful or helpful effects. Beliefs and ideologies are assessed for their environmental implications. Ecocritics analyse the history of concepts such as 'nature', in an attempt to understand the cultural developments that have led to the present global ecological crisis. (530)

Ecocriticism, while still in its nascent stage, extends into various fields of studies to explore this man-nature relationship. Glotfelty tries to present the developmental stages of ecocriticism, based on Elaine Showalter's model of the three developmental stages of feminist criticism. The first stage is the study of nature and its representation in literature. The second is the revival of the genre of nature writing and the writers that established a tradition of nature-oriented works. Glotfelty explains:

> Corresponding to the feminist interest in the lives of women authors, ecocritics have studied the environmental conditions of an author's life—the influence of place on the imagination—demonstrating that where an author grew up, travelled, and wrote is pertinent to an understanding of his or her work. (xxiii-xxiv)

The third stage is the theoretical phase which seeks to examine the "symbolic construction of species" (ibid.). It studies and questions the presence of dualisms in western thought which seeks to polarise the human from the natural world, men from women, mind from body and so on. Ecocriticism, as a result, branches out into various theoretical fields such as deep ecology, ecofeminism, spiritual ecology, social and socialist ecology.

1.3.1 Deep Ecology

Deep ecology was conceived in the early 1970s by the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess and developed in the 1980s by US environmentalists Bill Devall and George Sessions. The term 'deep' is placed in contrast with 'shallow' ecology which seeks to protect the environment mainly for the health and affluence of people in the developed countries (Naess, "Deep Ecology" 120). Deep ecology is founded on two basic principles: one, that a scientific insight into the interrelatedness of all systems of life on earth, together with the idea that anthropocentrism – human-centeredness – is a misguided way of seeing things. Instead of regarding humans as something completely unique or chosen by God, deep ecologists see man as integral threads in the fabric of life. The second component of deep ecology is what Arne Naess calls the need for human self-realization. Instead of identifying with our egos or our immediate families, one should learn to identify with trees and animals and

plants, indeed the whole ecosphere. According to Arne Naess, there are eight points to which the movement of deep ecology adheres to:

> 1. The well-being and flourishing of human and nonhuman Life on Earth have value in themselves (synonyms: intrinsic value, inherent value). These values are independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes.
>
> 2. Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of these values and are also values in themselves.
>
> 3. Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs.
>
> 4. The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of the human population. The flourishing of nonhuman life *requires* a smaller human population.
>
> 5. Present human interference with the nonhuman world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening.
>
> 6. Policies must therefore be changed. These policies affect basic economic, technological, and ideological structures. The resulting state of affairs will be deeply different from the present.
>
> 7. The ideological change is mainly that of appreciating life quality (dwelling in situations of inherent value) rather than adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living. There will be a profound awareness of the difference between bigness and greatness.
>
> 8. Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to try to implement the necessary changes. (“The Deep Ecological Movement” 439)

Deep ecology is not a short-term movement like shallow ecology or reform environmentalism. It critiques the dominant social paradigm and seeks the transformation of values and social organisation (Devall 128). Ultimately, deep ecologists seek to liberate and develop an ecological consciousness.

1.3.2 Ecofeminism

The term 'ecofeminism', first used by Francoise d'Eaubonne, began in the late 1970s and early 1980s. It grew out of various social movements such as the feminist, peace and ecological movements (Mies and Shiva 486). Ecofeminists explores the connections between the domination of women, people of colour, the economically marginalised and nature. The following are some definitions of ecofeminism.

According to Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva, "An ecofeminist perspective propounds the need for a new cosmology and a new anthropology which recognises that life in nature (which includes human beings) is maintained by means of co-operation, and mutual care and love" (482). Karen J. Warren defines it as, "Ecofeminist philosophy draws on feminism, ecology and environmentalism, and philosophy in its analysis of human systems of unjustified domination ("isms of domination")" (*Ecofeminist Philosophy* 43). Ynestra King writes:

> Ecological feminism is about reconciliation and conscious meditation, about recognition of the underside of history and all the invisible voiceless activities of women over millennia. It is about connectedness and wholeness of theory and practice. It is the return of the repressed—all that has been denigrated and denied to build this hierarchal civilization with its multiple systems of dominance. (205)

One of the important issues explored by ecofeminists is the 'logic of domination', which explains and justifies subordination (Warren, "The Power and Promise" 472). The notion of patriarchy which places the superiority of man over woman finds its roots in this 'logic of domination'. This same logic, used to justify the domination of humans by gender, race and class, is also used to justify the domination of nature. Ecofeminists seek to eliminate such dualistic pattern of thinking. They believe in the restructuring of such dualisms ingrained in social and political institutions. Thus, ecofeminism is "non-hierarchical, egalitarian and nonviolent" (468).

1.3.3. Social Ecology

According to Timothy Clark, Social ecology, "is a term largely associated with the work of Murray Bookchin, and, more loosely, with arguments that violence against the natural world has its origins in human social and economic institutions based on oppressive systems of hierarchy and elitism" (89). For Bookchin, prior to the domination of nature was the domination of man. Social ecologists oppose these power relations and hierarchies stamped in society and, instead, seek to promote "a more general social transformation and give people practice in sustainable living and participatory democracy" (Garrard 33). In the essay, "The Concept of Social Ecology," Bookchin highlights on the importance of developing a more reconstructive approach to examine man's relationship with the natural world without renouncing the gains of earlier scientific and social theories. The split between humanity and nature is critiqued, but at the same time, there is also an emphasis on the need to heal them (Bookchin 154-55).

1.3.4. Spiritual Ecology

The anthropocentric interpretation of Judeo-Christian theology which bases the system of domination in its religious roots is seen as one of the major factors in

the imbalance between man and nature. Spiritual ecology seeks for a reinterpretation of religion by exploring the sacred in nature. Matthew T. Fox proposes four paths to a spiritual ecology. Instead of beginning the religious experience with original sin, Fox suggests towards a religious experience of awe and wonder. Delighting in creation is the first step towards spiritual ecology (*Via Positiva*). The second path, according to Fox is *Via Negativa*, i.e., experiencing darkness, despair and grief. It is through this dark experiences that one is transformed and renewed. These two experiences lead to a third path, that of creativity. A rebirth of creativity takes place through the experiences of delight and despair (*Via Creativa*). This means giving birth to new ecological virtues, such as vegetarianism, recycling, relearning the sacredness of nature and making new rituals to celebrate sacred places, times and being in nature. The fourth and final step is a transformation to a more compassionate society in which all beings love one another (*Via Transformativa*) (Fox 228-234). Spiritual ecology seeks to rethink spirituality. By reformulating one's religious structure based on domination, a re-engagement with the environment in sought, whereby, the inter-connectedness of the human and non-human world is acknowledged. A re-evaluation of one's responsibility towards nature and re-discovering the scared in nature is a step closer towards a spiritual ecology.

From the above mentioned, one can gather that ecocriticism not only examines the concept of nature and the natural world, more importantly, it tries to bring an awareness of our responsibility towards the natural world. This sense of responsibility towards the environment is developed further in what is known as environmental ethics. In the introduction to the book *Environmental Ethics: Divergence and Convergence*, Botzler and Armstrong explain the multidisciplinary scope of environmental ethics, "Because environmental ethics concerns the human

relationship to the environment, it includes all of the major perspectives on this relationship: scientific, ethical, aesthetic, political, economic, and religious (2). With these perspectives in mind, analysis has been made of the works of N. Scott Momaday, Leslie Marmon Silko, Temsula Ao and Easterine Kire. In trying to study and understand the work of Native American writers alongside Naga writers with respect to alienation and ecocriticism, it is hoped that these issues be further taken and discussed to bring about changes in the way we encounter and perceive the world. Ecocriticism, Glotfelty explains, "has been predominantly a white movement" and believes that "it will become a multi-ethnic movement when stronger connections are made between the environment and issues of social-justice, and when a diversity of voices are encouraged to contribute to the discussion" (xxv). In the light of this statement then, perhaps the study of these two very differently located and yet vastly similar experiences can open forth new ventures into not only aiding and understanding these writers but also help pave way for further research in the future.

1.4 Native American History and Literature: An Overview

To understand Native American literature, one should understand the "plurality of Native American cultures and the multiplicity of types of oral and written literature (genres) that comprise the artistic expressions of Native peoples within the United States" (Lundquist 1). Although often clubbed under the term 'Native American', 'American Indian' or 'Native Indian', the native tribes of America have their own distinct culture and tradition. Similar patterns in languages and cultural practices can be traced among the different Native American tribes; however, they vary from one tribe to another. Thus, despite the existing similarities, a

particular tribe may for example, not understand the language of its neighbouring village. Because of this heterogeneous nature, the Native Americans reacted to the arrival of the Europeans, "based on their pre-existing worldviews, religious beliefs, and political alliances. Equally important, different European groups arriving in the New World dealt with Indian peoples according to their own imperialist goals and cultural dispositions" (Lappas II: 250).

The history of Native Americans cannot be formulated without taking into account the numerous historical landmarks that make America today. It is often widely misunderstood that the European settlers came to an America that was very loosely inhabited by groups of warring tribes. Charles C. Mann in his book, *1491: New Revelations of the Americas before Columbus* writes: "Indians were here far longer than previously thought… and in much greater numbers. And they were so successful at imposing their will on the landscape that in 1492 Columbus set foot in a hemisphere thoroughly marked by humankind" (8). Conflicts between the different tribes existed before the arrival of the Europeans and it further intensified as trading alliances were formed between the various Native tribes and the Europeans. While the French were for most times involved in trade and commerce with the natives, the British desire for land would often lead to conflicts with the Indians.

> Whether seeking religious community in New England or staple crop agriculture in Virginia, the British required land for towns and farmland for both crops and livestock. This vision of the land assumed that it was largely unoccupied, and both in New England and Virginia war consequently broke out (Lappas II: 252).

Not only did the European colonisers bring with them diseases which the native settlers were vulnerable to, more dangerously, they believed that they "were ordained

by destiny to rule all of America" (Brown 8). The rapidly expanding colonies soon led to conflicts between different European countries which culminated in the Seven Years' War (1754-1763). With the French ultimately ousted, it "ensured the dominance of English-speaking peoples over North America and set the stage for the American Revolutionary War (1775-83)" (Pencak, II: 348). The Paris Peace Treaty of 1783 ended the war between Britain and the colonial settlers with Britain finally acknowledging America as an independent nation. While lands were being exchanged and demarcated between the different colonies, the Native Americans were further relegated away from a discourse that would ultimately affect them. America in its nascent stage began establishing boundaries and expanding their settlements towards the west which resulted in the massive displacement of the Native Americans from their ancestral lands. This expansionist policy was further encouraged under the guise of Manifest Destiny, which asserted that it was the 'divine' duty of America to "expand its borders across the entire North American continent, and, in the process, to spread its democratic principle and its Christian civilization to less developed and unenlightened people" (Hawley IV: 234). This idea allowed America to enact Acts and treaties that favoured the growing colonies. The Indian Removal Act of 1830 forced the Choctaw, Chickasaw, Cherokee, Creek and the Seminoles away from their ancestral lands. They were amongst the most powerful Native American tribes and were often referred to as the Five Civilized Tribes. However, the desire to expand the newly independent territories of America forced these tribes towards the lands west of the Mississippi river which was loosely termed as 'Indian Territory'. Thousands died on the way due to exhaustion, extreme cold and lack of food supplies. This forced exodus was only the beginning of a long struggle between the Native Americans and the Euroamericans:

> Such were the devastating effects of the removal that the Cherokee called their route "Nunna dual Tsuny" ("the trail where they cried"). In time, the "Trail of Tears" came to apply to the combined experience of all Indian Nations removed from the Southeast (Denial IV: 378).

The Indian Removal Act was closely followed by the General Allotment Act of 1887 (also known as the Dawes Severalty Act of 1887) which saw the breaking down of the Native American tradition of collective land holding. The division of land from the community to individual ownership signalled the breaking of the Native American community. Focus was set on the individual thereby destabilising the communal fellowship that held the tribal community together. "The act undermined the collective, communal tradition within tribal structures and imposed an individualistic concept of land ownership" (Sendrow VI: 93-94). It sought to assimilate the tribals into a definitive concept of an emerging America and believed it possible only by separating the individual from the community. The breaking up of the ownership of lands thus not only affected the Native Americans on a physical level, but it also brought about alienation from a communal setup that had once governed the lives of the various Native American tribes.

Assimilation of Native Americans into mainstream America however, began long before the introduction of such acts and reforms. To a large extent, European missionaries played active roles in converting the Natives to Christianity and in the process of becoming 'civilised' and 'Europeanised.' The French, Spanish and English missionaries undertook the responsibility of "civilising" the natives. The establishment of schools and hospitals aided them in their mission of bringing the tribals within the folds of Christianity. Pencak explains the way different Christian denominations spread across the American nation: "The French, Spanish and English

participated in significant efforts to convert Indian peoples to their brand of Christianity. For the French and Spanish, this meant Catholicism, and for the British, Protestantism" (II: 253). The arrival of the missionaries not only exposed the Native Americans to a different religion, it also exposed them to a way of life that was distinctly different from their own. The establishment of mission schools played an important role in the acculturation process. While the oral tradition of the Native Americans still retained its hold towards their cultural continuity, the European colonisers brought along with it the written word and as a result, writing took precedence over orality. The western education system enabled the natives to read and write which further strengthened the hold of the colonisers.

The Native American culture, heavily based on oral tradition like many indigenous tribes, underwent various changes as a result. Moving from an oral-based system to a written system created breaks in a community that was strongly held together by words. A similar pattern can be witnessed among the Nagas which will be discussed in the succeeding chapters. For the younger generations, it became doubly hard to try and fit into the changing scenario. This thesis explicates the work of two prominent Native American writers that revitalized and changed the Native American literary scene. N. Scott Momaday with his Pulitzer Prize novel, *House Made of Dawn* (1968), set the stage for a 'Native American Renaissance' that would not only change the way they perceived themselves but in the process of finding themselves, also change the way they write. Momaday's work captures the turmoil of a generation that is caught between the old and the new and creates a way to synthesize the two together. Both, Momaday and Silko's work touches on the question of alienation and the quest for self. There is a displacement of the self where the characters are no longer comfortable in their own land. They are not only

strangers in a foreign land, but they are also strangers in their own land. Momaday and Silko create a strong yearning for the past rites and rituals. While the characters inevitably absorb the new culture of the Europeans, the writers present a possibility of reconciliation between the past and the present. There is a constant struggle between the 'outside' world and the Native American world. The war veterans portrayed by Silko and Momaday seem to be most affected by this conflict. Their experience with the outside world and the short term glory they experienced in the war front fails to take permanent shape once they return to their old lives. Their heroism forgotten, they slowly become just another "brown" Native American. The sense of identity they felt in being a 'US' citizen, their bravado as they fought for their 'country' slowly recedes only to be replaced by a strong sense of alienation.

At the centre of it all, there is nature. Nature no longer remains a mere backdrop in the texts. It is seen as a character connecting the past, the present and the future. Nature is no longer passive. It plays a strong role in bridging the void. In finding and respecting their land and the natural world, they begin to reclaim their identity and find a sense of belongingness from within.

1.5 Naga History and Literature: An Overview

The Nagas comprises of a group of tribes living in and around the Indian state of Nagaland. The term "Naga" or "Nagas" as used to represent the people in Nagaland have not long been in use. Prior to this term, the different Naga tribes were known by their individual tribes and within that tribe, by their respective villages. Each tribe had their own distinct set of language, customs and governing system. Kaka Iralu states that "under the Naga political system and tradition, every village of every tribe was an independent republic in its own right. No tribe had ever ruled over

any other tribe or any village over any other village" (5). Certain theories posit that the term "Naga" is derived from the Bengali word *nangta*, or the Hindustani word *nanga,* meaning 'naked',' crude' or 'barbarous'. According to Peal, the term is derived from the root *nog, nok*, meaning "people" and has been used in the *Borunjis* or "The History of the Kings of Assam" dating from the 13th century (W. Smith 166-68). The meaning of the word *Naga* is, however, still widely debated and as such cannot be assigned one fixed meaning. Lorin and Tinyi write that the self-awareness of Nagas came about partly due to the global political unrest caused by the two World Wars and partly due to the rise and spread of nationalism in different parts of the world in the first half of the 20th century (2).

With the occupation of Assam by the British in 1826, "the British inherited many of the problems the Assamese kingdom had faced, including the occasional but terrorising Naga raids from the hills" (Eaton 6). As a result, the British set about on various expeditions to stop the Naga raids on the settlements of Assam. From 1832 to 1947, the British occupied the Naga Hills. However, because of the vast hilly terrains, difficult passages and numerous tribes living in Nagaland, the British could only occupy certain Naga villages thereby affecting changes to a large extent only in those particular tribes. After much raids and numerous expeditions, the British finally set up its administrative centre in Kohima in 1878, signalling the beginning of a new era for the Naga people.

Much like the Native American tribes, the Nagas passed down ancestral knowledge through story-telling, songs and poetry. The arrival of the British in Nagaland in 1832, followed by the American missionaries brought about drastic changes among the Naga tribes. The missionaries set out to inculcate "western education" to the Nagas in order to enable them to read the Bible and sing hymnals.

According to M. Alemchiba, while Naga literature has grown out of primers, grammar and translation, a bulk of it is confined to Christian themes (161). The introduction of "western education" soon posed a great threat to the Naga oral tradition. In addition, the Indo-Japanese war of 1944 and the subsequent conflict following the Nagas' demand for independence soon saw an increase in the killings and displacement of Naga people from their villages. In "War and the Silencing of Naga Narratives," Easterine Kire states, "The peace that is essential to the continuation of oral narratives was lost. The war years also killed many oral narrators and folk narratives were further silenced in the premature deaths of their carriers" (np). As a result, oral tradition rapidly deteriorated, leaving behind a cultural calamity in its wake.

The process of conversion was also a process towards modernisation which furthered the Nagas in severing their ties with the past. The cultural changes brought about by western education and modernity soon created divisions among the traditional Nagas and the 'progressive' Nagas. The importance of the *morung*s, which was the repository for education among the Naga men and women, were slowly disregarded as western education took precedence. The tremendous changes that took place in the lives of the Naga people within a span of hundred years began to take its toll. The remnants of the impact of the two world wars as well as the conflict with the Indian Government began to surface. Following the declaration of Naga independence on 14th August 1947, a day before India's independence, the Naga relations with the government of India further deteriorated as mass unrest and boycott of elections developed. With the increasing presence of the armed forces, many Naga leaders went underground, and thus the mobilising of the tribals for armed combat began. The violence and trauma encountered by the people following this conflict can

be seen in the Naga literature which documents the lives of people caught in the crossfire. The rapidity with which the tribal lives have been transformed is explored in Naga literature through poems, novels and short stories.

Education allowed the Naga people, especially the women folk to explore new possibilities beyond the kitchen and fields. The contact with the outside world rapidly threatened to topple a culture integral to the formation of the Naga cultural identity. With so much cultural changes, the continuity of oral tradition could only extend so far before the larger forces of education and introduction of new laws took over. With the coming of the British in the Naga Hills, new sets of Acts and laws were introduced which destabilised the existing power of the village law council where relations were restored through negotiations and dialogue. Since the art of storytelling is interwoven in the fabric of oral tradition, the changing times soon saw a deteriorating of a very important part of a Naga culture. With modernity fast overtaking the cultural habits long revered in the Naga society, it is only apt that stories are now slowly being scripted and archived for the future generations.

Much of these internal conflicts are depicted in the works of Naga writers such as Temsula Ao, Easterine Kire and Monalisa Changkija. The subsequent chapters of the thesis focus on the works on Temsula Ao and Easterine Kire alongside Native American writers N. Scott Momaday and Leslie Marmon Silko. The writings of Ao and Kire try to navigate its way around the lives of common people affected and alienated by changes that seem to be taking over at a bewildering pace. Like Silko, Temsula Ao's short stories and poems attempt to rebuild a narrative similar to that of oral storytelling. At the same time, it brings into focus, the lives of people caught in the crossfire between the pre-colonial world and post-colonial world, between idealism and reality. Easterine Kire's writing depicts the fluidity of

Naga culture whereby the old and the new come together to utilise traditional and modern elements to form a culture that is being constantly questioned and transformed.

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CHAPTER II

CONTOURS OF ECOSOPHY IN THE SOULSCAPE OF N. SCOTT MOMADAY

2.1 Native American culture is heavily based on oral tradition. Oral tradition relies upon legends, myths, parables and song-poems for the transmission of cultures and traditions from one generation to the next. Because the Native Americans rely on oral narrations, it requires the participation of the entire community for its survival. The absence of the written word often wrongly presents the impression of a primitive mode of cultural transference, thus relegating it towards the periphery. There is a misconception that the written word is evidence of a higher developed society and that the concept 'literature' is to include only the written word. Oral literature is 'non-literate', which simply means that it is not an institutionalised form of literature. In *Man Made of Words*, Momaday states that "If writing means visible constructions within a framework of alphabets, it is not more than six or seven thousand years old... Language, and in it the formation of that cultural record which is literature, is immeasurably older. Oral tradition is the foundation of literature" (14).

Within the bindings of this unwritten and unscripted world, cultures and traditions have survived and can be seen at par with cultures that have been written and recorded. The fluid nature of oral tradition renders it difficult, almost impossible to select a particular timeline on what constitutes the so-called 'beginnings' of Native American literature. While oral tradition remained the sole basis for cultural continuity of the Native Americans, the arrival of the colonisers brought along with them the written word. Education, as one of the major agencies of the colonising process, soon saw an increase in English speaking Native Americans and as a result,

writing took precedence over orality. Only with the translation and printing of oral narratives to English did people come to the realisation of the presence of Native American literature (Lincoln 43).

John Rollin Ridge was the first Native American to publish a novel titled, *The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta, the Celebrated California Bandit* in 1854. Prior to this, most Native Americans writers wrote non-fiction prose—protest literature, autobiographies and ethnohistories—in response to the atrocities meted out to the Native American tribes (Ruoff 141). By 1968, only nine novels had been published by Native Americans. The reason for this, according to Louis Owens is that the "Native American novelists confront the additional challenge of making themselves understood in a prose form quite foreign to Native American discourse" (9). Writing would mean positioning oneself away from the 'authorless' cyclical nature of the Native American oral tradition and into a territory that is not only foreign but also antagonistic. This is evidenced in Rollin Ridge's cautious foray into the world of the American novel in which he uses the character of a Mexican-American bandit as a veil to hide the various atrocities faced by the Native Americans at that time. Ridge was followed by writers such as Simon Pokagon, Mourning Dove, John Milton Oskison, John Joseph Matthews and D'arcy Mc'Nickle. Mourning Dove's novel *Cogewea, the Half-Blood: A Depiction of the Great Montana Cattle Range* (1927) depicts the dilemma of being a "mixed-blood" and set the tone for other Native American writers such as Momaday and Silko (Owens 40).

In 1968, N. Scott Momaday published his first novel, *House Made of Dawn,* for which he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize. Termed by Kenneth Lincoln as "Native American Renaissance," the following years witnessed a resurgence of Native

American writings (8). Lincoln classifies N. Scott Momaday, Leslie Marmon Silko, James Welch and Alfonso Ortiz as belonging to the first wave of Native American Renaissance and states that "the new Indian writers are children of the old ways and students of historical transitions; they begin to serve as teachers of contemporary survival" (207). These new writings saw a revisiting of the Native American culture and tradition and a struggle for acceptance of one's indigenous identity. Oral traditions are renewed and incorporated into their writings as a means of continuing one's tradition in an increasingly text-based medium.

2.2 Momaday's Engagement with the Traditional and the Modern

Momaday's novel *House Made of Dawn* centres on Abel and his conflict with the world of his ancestors and the pull of industrial America. *House Made of Dawn* incorporates the traditional method of the Kiowa story-telling by creating a non-linear narrative. Louis Owens distinguishes the writings of Momaday from most canonized texts by stating that, "It is a sophistication of 'otherness,' a discourse requiring that readers pass through an 'alien conceptual horizon' and engage a 'reality' unfamiliar to most readers. The Native Americans' belief in the cyclical nature of the world can be seen in his works as he attempts to fuse the oral narrative structure within the written world. In *The Man Made of Words*, Momaday writes that oral tradition is just one generation away from extinction (10). The relocation of the Native American tribes from their ancestral land created cracks in the oral narrative because land and nature are inextricably linked to oral tradition. Leslie Marmon Silko states that the Pueblo people depended upon collective memory through successive generations to maintain and transmit an entire culture, a worldview complete with proven strategies for survival (*Yellow Woman* 30). While Silko is speaking

specifically of the Laguna Pueblo tribe, this system of transmitting an entire culture can be applied to most, if not all of the Native American tribes. As mentioned in Chadwick Allen's essay "N. Scott Momaday: Becoming the Bear", memories of ancestors and their stories become vehicles for connecting Momaday to particular landscapes and their dense history (213). For the new generation living in the reservations, the descriptions of certain outcroppings in the land, the shape of a certain tree in the tale, etc. would mean very little without physical proof to corroborate the narration. The link between the land and oral tradition thus becomes extremely fragile. By incorporating elements of native oral tradition in the novel, Momaday tries to bring a synthesis between the past and the present. The text begins with the word "Dypaloh". According to Momaday, "Dypaloh" is a traditional word of the Jemez Pueblo used to indicate the beginning of the story. Similarly, the novel ends with the word "Qtsedaba" which is the also a Jemez word used to indicate the end of a story. Utilising the Native American oral tradition of beginning a story subverts the mainstream American fictional writing and creates a place for the growth of a literature that arises out of a culture regarded more often than not, as the "other". "Dypaloh" signals not only "a transformative act" in the way literature is read, but it also runs alongside the transformation of the protagonist who finds his place within a world that appears alien and dislocated (Owens 93). The text is then, in a sense, supported by traditional Jemez Indian words that seek to hold the rest of the narrative together. This is also seen in Leslie Marmon Silko's novel *Ceremony*, in which the word "sunrise" holds together the structure of the text. Dawn or sunrise reveals the beginning of something, a regeneration of the protagonists from the malady that had been keeping them away from themselves and from the world at large. *House Made of Dawn* also finds within its texts, oral narratives integral to

Native American culture. The title of the novel is taken from the Navajo Night Chant which is a chant for healing and restoration. This chant is sung by Benally for Abel. The novel is interspersed with chants, songs and myths. The myth of the Devils Tower and the *War God's Horse Song* find their place within the narrative. Native Americans believe that time is cyclical. The prologue begins with Abel running the ceremonial race at dawn and ends with the same, creating a circular narrative in the process. The bringing together of "Dypaloh" and "Qtsedaba*"* thus creates a full circle. Momaday affirms this in his interview with Lee Abbott, "*House Made of Daw*n is very symmetrical. I see it as a circle. It ends where it begins and it's informed with a kind of thread that runs through it and holds everything together. The book itself is a race" (31).

In the novel *Ancient Child*, the prologue is a Kiowa story of the Tsoai. It narrates the tale of eight children and their various transformations. Of the eight children, the brother transforms into a bear and the seven sisters, into the stars of the Big Dipper. The story of the Tsoai or the Devils Tower is also narrated by Tosamah in *House Made of Dawn* and becomes the backdrop of Set's journey in *Ancient Child*. The novel describes the journey of Set and his subsequent transformation. Set is the Kiowa name for a bear and his tale finds affinity with the myth of the Tsoai. Furthermore, Tsoai-talee is the Kiowa name of Momaday. In an interview with Joseph Bruchac, Momaday explains, "Tsoai-talee means 'rock-tree boy.' It commemorates my having been taken, at the age of six months or so, to Devils Tower, Wyoming, which is a sacred place in Kiowa tradition. And the Kiowas call it 'rock-tree'" (105). The autobiographical/fictional nature of the novel explores both Set's as well as Momaday's journey and their struggle to come to terms with their "ancestral bear nature" (Frischkorn 23). The transformation of the boy into a bear

runs parallel to the story of Set who finds himself caught between the pull of the modern world on one side and the pull of his ancestral land on the other. In *House Made of Dawn,* Tosamah explains the need to create meaning out of the unknown. He uses the example of the Tsoai or the Devils Tower which is a huge monolith that protrudes from the earth, similar to the shape of a tree stump. Tosamah explains:

> There are things in nature which engender an awful quiet in the heart of man; Devils Tower is one of them. Man must account for it. He must never fail to explain such a thing to himself or else he is estranged forever from the universe. Two centuries ago, because they could not do otherwise, the Kiowas made a legend at the base of the rock. (115)

For the protagonists, Abel and Set, both have to find meaning in the world in order to survive. They have to create their story and find their place in the mythic world of which they are intrinsically linked. To re-imagine oneself is a central philosophy of Momaday. In his essay "Man Made of Words", Momaday states "We are what we imagine. Our very existence consists in our imagination of ourselves. Our best destiny is to imagine, at least, completely, who and what, and *that* we are. The greatest tragedy that can befall us is to go unimagined" (167). Set has to re-imagine himself as becoming one with the bear, as much as Abel has to imagine his place among the runners after evil. Abel comes to the realisation of the unifying act of running as he lay beaten and bruised on the shore. He reflects back on the runners and the purpose of their running:

> suddenly he saw the crucial sense in their going, of old men in white leggings running after evil in the night. They were whole and indispensable in what they did; everything in creation referred to

> them. Because of them, perspective, proportion, design in the universe. Meaning because of them. They ran with great dignity and calm, not in the hope of anything, but hopelessly; neither in fear nor despair of evil, but simply in recognition and with respect. (91-92)

House Made of Dawn ends with the running of Abel at dawn, finally re-integrating and recognising himself as one with the earth. *Ancient Child* ends with an epilogue describing the convergence of Set into his bear self. He becomes one with the mythic story of the bear child. Time and space remain fluid as he dreams of things that happened before his time, "The whole history of the people was played out n the myriad points of light—each one a world and an age—that glided across the plane of his dreaming" (315). In incorporating the oral tradition of story-telling, chants and songs within the novel, Momaday consciously seeks to apply elements of Native American oral tradition into his writings in order to develop a literature that is inclusive of oral elements which are slowly edging towards the periphery.

2.3 In search of a Centre

In Momaday's novels, *House Made of Dawn* and *Ancient Child*, both protagonists begin their journey in search of a centre. Their separation from their traditional past is directly connected to the crisis of the self. They are both alienated beings, disconnected not only from the world but also from themselves. In *House Made of Dawn*, the physical and mental dislocation from the land is brought about by many factors, World War II being one of them. The war memories like most of the textual narratives appear in fragments. Abel's involvement in the war doubly affects him. Just like Silko's protagonist, Tayo, in *Ceremony*, Abel struggles to come to terms with the post-war world and tries to find solace in alcohol. The experience with

the outside world and the short term glory he experienced in the war front fails to take permanent shape once he returns to the village. All heroism of the soldiers are forgotten, and they become just another "brown" Native American.

Abel's involvement in the war brings him into contact with the outside world, a world that is culturally different from his communal based life in Walatowa. His sense of alienation, however, goes beyond the war. It stems from the inability to come to terms with his mixed-blood. Abel's father had always remained a mystery to him, "He did not know who his father was. His father was a Navajo, they said, or a Sia, or an Isleta, an outsider anyway, which made him and his mother and Vidal somehow foreign and strange" (11). Momaday brings out the underlying fact that although the various Native American tribes are conglomerated under the term "Native American" or "American Indian", they often differ widely in their religious and cultural practices. This difference is deeply felt by Abel who has to live with the 'outsider' status. While various factors provide cause for Abel to reaffirm his otherness, Abel had in fact always felt a sense of alienation from within his own village. He is not only a stranger in a foreign land, but he is also a stranger in his own land. This feeling of estrangement prevents Abel from wholly committing himself to a place where he never truly felt accepted. The absence of his father and the death of his mother and brother, further add to his feeling of disconnection and detachment. Abel's inability to express himself adds to his feeling of isolation. This gap further widens when he moves away from his home to become a soldier. Rahel Jaeggi states that "Alienation means indifference and internal division, but also powerlessness and relationlessness with respect to oneself and to a world experienced as indifferent and alien" (3). The relation between Abel and the world changes as he grows. On returning to his native land, Abel finds himself in the periphery. He remembers his

experiences in the village, but remembers them with a sense of loss, “He had tried in the days that followed to speak to his grandfather, but he could not say the things he wanted; he tried to pray, to sing to enter into the old rhythm of the tongue, but he was no longer attuned to it” (53). Abel’s inability to articulate mirrors his inability to fully integrate and immerse himself back to his world. His grandfather, Francisco is his only living relation. He is the intermediary between Abel and his ancestral knowledge, but the absence of Abel denies this bonding. In an interview with Lawrence J. Evers, Momaday describes Abel as a man without a voice, “He has been uprooted. He has been physically dislocated. He has lost his place in the world, and he’s desperate; therefore, he’s a man who’s trying to fit himself back into his natural world” (39). Central to Native American culture is the oral tradition and for the transmission of which, the faculty of speech is necessary. Abel’s inability to articulate, his inability to speak, presents a problem in the transferring of ancestral knowledge. “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 rhythm of the tongue, but he was no longer attuned to it” (Momaday, *House Made* ...53). It is pertinent to note here that Abel had once been attuned with his language and that it had shaped the world for him. The removal of Abel from his grandfather, Francisco, in order to get an education and his service as a soldier during the war takes him outside of the land and detaches him from his roots. The ability to articulate is thus taken away as a result of the detachment. Abel is aware of this difficulty in expressing himself. He becomes alienated as a result. He is no longer seen in relation with the person he once was and this relationlessness of Abel from his former self, causes a feeling of alienation in the protagonist, for according to Rahel Jaeggi, “alienation is a relation of relationlessness...alienation does not indicate

the absence of a relation but is itself a relation, if a deficient one" (1). Momaday makes certain that the reader does not misunderstand Abel's inability to speak as silence. He was "not dumb—silence was the older and better part of custom still—but inarticulate" (Momaday, *House Made* 21). This inability to explain himself and his world pushes Abel away from his grandfather and away from his centre. "He was alone, and he wanted to make a song out of the coloured canyon, the way the women of Torreon made songs upon their looms out of coloured yarn, but he had not got the right words together. It would have been a creation song (53). If he had the words, Abel could have created himself whole and back to his roots, but he is still far too removed to be well and truly able to speak in a language familiar to his tongue. He loses his centre, the place that was once familiar, becomes foreign after his return to Walatowa. Momaday writes, "He had lost his place. He had been long ago at the centre, had known where he was, had lost his way, had wandered to the end of the earth, was even now reeling on the edge of the void" (92).

The notion of powerlessness runs strongly in *House Made of Dawn*. Abel is caught between two worlds, fitting into neither one and seemingly detached from both. The assimilation into the coloniser's culture is inevitable and can be witnessed in the novel where Christian and Native American ceremonies are celebrated side by side. Momaday makes a conscious effort to show the influence of Christian missionaries on the Native Americans. This can be evidenced in the characters, most of whose names have been derived from the Bible. When Father Olguin reads his predecessor's journals and letters, we find Fray Nicolas vehemently condemning Francisco's (who is also Abel's grandfather) involvement in tribal ceremonies. Nicolas is unable to fully convert Francisco who takes part in both Christian as well as native ceremonies. Fray Nicolas writes, "He is one of them & goes often in the

kiva & puts on their horns & hides & does worship that serpent which even is the One our most ancient enemy. Yet he is unashamed to make one of my sacristans & brother I am most fearful to forbid it" (46). Fray Nicolas fails to accept the possibility of a fusion between Christianity and tribal religious practices and believes that Francisco's coming to church is a deliberate attempt to publicly defy him. He is also frightened by Francisco's practice of snake worshipping because it is completely at odds with the basic Christian belief of snake as a symbol of evil. The snake imagery keeps recurring in the text and we find an overturning of the biblical narrative when Abel kills the albino. It is ironic because, in the Bible, Abel is killed by Cain in a fit of jealous rage. This subversion of the biblical narrative can perhaps be explained by the following lines in the text, "They have assumed the names and gestures of their enemies, but have held on to their own, secret souls; and in this there is a resistance and an overcoming, a long outwaiting" (52-53). In subverting the Old Testament story, Momaday recreates a powerful image of the loss of innocence.

Abel's humiliation at the hands of the albino, who Momaday also refers to as "the white man" and the subsequent killing of the albino marks Abel much like Cain who is marked by God after the murder of his brother. The acute sense of powerlessness builds within Abel culminating in murder. No clear-cut motive is provided for the albino's murder. Abel's usage of the word "culebra" to refer to the albino is important. Culebra means 'snake' in Spanish. Although revered and worshipped by certain Native American tribes, snakes also symbolise chaos and darkness. Perhaps the albino's skin reminded Abel of the white-skinned colonisers and his killing of the albino was a symbolic act of killing the white man who had brought unwanted change and destruction. Perhaps the motive lay behind the simple

fact that Abel was humiliated by the albino during the Feast of Santiago. Whatever the reasons, no concrete explanations are provided and Abel remains remorseless:

> He had killed the white man. It was not a complicated thing, after all; it was very simple. It was the most natural thing in the world. Surely, they could see that, these men who meant to dispose of him in words. They must know that he would kill the white man again, if he had the chance, that there could be no hesitation whatsoever. For he would know what the white man was, and he would kill him if he could. (90-91)

The loss of innocence is evident as Abel's life spirals downwards thereon. He is jailed for seven years and is relocated to Los Angeles. His relocation to Los Angeles exiles Abel from his native land. This sense of alienation is furthered by his inability to fit in the Indian Relocation centre. Abel's movement from the village to the urbanised jungle of Los Angeles and back to the village is circular. In the urban setting of Los Angeles, we find Tosamah, the priest who has fully integrated himself within the urban culture. He laughs at Abel's struggle or lack thereof, to fit into the new system and tries to break his spirit. He derides Abel and calls him 'longhair', a derogatory term referred to Native Americans set in the old traditional ways. Momaday describes Tosamah as being "very displaced", but he uses the power of language to find his place in society. Tosamah imagines himself into becoming a vehicle, a spokesperson to speak out on Native American world. Momaday states, "he was what he was—he became himself a kind of oracle in the book; he thought of himself in those terms. he was fascinated by language, took it upon himself to deal in language, to be a spokesman of a kind; to represent his culture in language" (Morgan, Jr. 50). While Abel has no words, Tosamah has plenty. He is the trickster figure and

manifests within him several guises with which to voice himself. The trickster figure is seen in myths and legends around the world such as Anansi, Br'er Rabbit and Coyote. In North America, the trickster is seen as a creator or re-creator of the world (Bastian and Mitchell 210). According to Suzanne Lundquist:

> Often playing the fool, Tricksters inadvertently create order out of chaos. Or Trickster's escapades mock foolish, obsessive behaviour—gluttony, sexual avarice, gender arrogance, self-centeredness, ideological addiction. Through the adventures of Trickster, the contingent nature of human experience is established and invitations to appropriate behaviour are made. (5)

Momaday uses Tosamah as a medium with which to narrate stories of his grandmother, history of the people and of the myths he heard as a boy. Tosamah imagines himself into being and so does Ben Benally. Benally finds his place within the urban world but he is also well aware of his native roots. He is aware of the necessity of change in order to survive. He sings and chants and prays in the traditional manner even though he has adopted to settle within the cultural paradigm of the whites. Unlike Tosamah and Benally, Abel keeps floundering. There is recurring fish imagery in the novel and Abel, like the silver fishes, jump into the air only to be caught by the waiting net. In the absence of Abel's grandfather, Benally becomes the vehicle for the restoration of Abel. Unlike Tosamah, he does not make fun of Abel but is truly concerned for his welfare. Benally helps Abel by imagining a reality for him:

> I don't know what he wanted to say. I guess he wanted me to say something first, so I started to talk about the way it was going to be...He was going home, and he was going to be all right again. And

> someday I was going home, too, and we were going to meet some place out there in the reservation and get drunk together...It was going to be good again, you know? We were going to get drunk for the last time, and we were going to sing the old songs. We were going to sing about the way it used to be, how there was nothing all around but the hills and the sunrise and the clouds. (Momaday, *House Made...*129)

Benally helps Abel find his footing and together they vow to one day meet and sing and chant the ancient words of their ancestors. In *Man Made of Words*, Momaday explains, "In oral tradition stories are told not merely to entertain or to instruct; they are told to be believed. Stories are not subject to the imposition of such questions as true or false, fact or fiction. Stories are realities lived and believed" (3). As much as Tosamah creates his own reality, Benally helps create Abel's. Momaday writes of the storyteller, "The storyteller says in effect: 'On this occasion I am, for I imagine that I am; and on this occasion you are, for I imagine that you are. And this imagining is the burden of the story, and indeed it is the story'" (ibid). Coupled together with the Navajo Night Chant, Benally prepares the way for the healing of Abel. The title of the novel, *House Made of Dawn* is taken from the Navajo chant which is a chant for healing and it is this healing song that Benally sings for Abel:

> *Tsegihi*
>
> House made of dawn
>
> House made of evening light
>
> House made of dark cloud,
>
> House made of male rain,
>
> House made of dark mist,
>
> House made of female rain,

House made of pollen,

House made of grasshoppers,

Dark cloud is at the door.

The trail out of it is dark cloud.

The zigzag lightning stands high upon it.

Male deity!

Your offspring I make.

I have prepared a smoke for you.

Restore my feet for me,

Restore my legs for me.

This very day take out your spell for me.

Your spell remove for me;

Far off it has gone.

Happily I recover.

Happily my interior becomes cool.

Happily I go forth.... (129)

Tsegihi means "'place among the rocks', place of origin" (*Man Made of Words* 115). Abel and Benally's vow to meet together marks the return of Abel to the place of his origin. Nature is seen as a healer. It no longer remains a mere backdrop in the texts but is seen as a character connecting the past, the present and the future. The 'house' in the chant is made from the different life-giving elements of nature, signifying oneness with the earth. As Abel lay beaten and battered by the beach, he comes to the realisation that in order to heal, he must return to his native land. This realisation of land as healer begins Abel's journey into finding himself. According to Holly E. Martin, it is on the beach that Abel comes to terms with himself. "For Abel, the beach

represents the two worlds between which he hangs suspended. It is a place where he must take stock of his environment and decide where he belongs" (65). This realisation enables Abel to move forward and return to Walatowa. When Abel arrives home, he finds his grandfather on his deathbed. Francisco's death and Abel's return marks the passing of tradition from one generation to the other. Abel immerses himself into the old tradition as he ceremonially prepares his grandfather's body. The old generation, symbolised by Francisco is dead and it is up to Abel to follow and preserve the old tradition. Francisco's memory of his dawn race becomes concrete in Abel as he takes over from his memory to perform the ceremonial race. The ceremonial running at dawn is the final act of Abel in reintegrating himself to his native land. "He could see the rain and rivers and the fields beyond. He could see the dark hills at dawn. He was running, and under his breath, he began to sing" (185). Abel becomes one with nature. He becomes aware of his surroundings and the beauty of the land that he had in the past failed to notice. His eyes have finally been opened. But most importantly, he sings. The words which he once found difficult to speak, flows from his lips. The passing of Francisco and Abel's ability to finally sing, and not merely speak, is a powerful moment in the novel. Abel sings under his breath, but "there was no sound, and he had no voice; he had only the words of a song" (185). Singing is an important part of oral tradition. Abel is healed through words and it is through words that he repays. According to Kenneth Lincoln, song-poets, "give the songs back to those powers that granted them voice, humbling themselves before nature's tribal circle; their visions enrich public ceremonies so vital to tribal health" (44). Abel becomes the carrier of ancient songs, songs that do not belong to him alone and hence, the inability to hear his voice. He is carrying the collective voice of

the people that have shaped and given life to the songs. He is the new generation that will carry forward the ancestral voices.

Ancient Child begins with a question "¿ Quien es?" which means, 'Who is there?' or 'Who are you?'. This question is central to the character of Set who is trying to find himself and his place in the world. Set, although an established painter in the art world, is dissatisfied with his life. At forty-four, is aware of the compromises he has made to bring himself to the position of one of the top American artists of his age. "He wanted to paint a tree, but he was obliged to paint a house; he wanted to paint small, but he was obliged to paint large; he wanted to do something he had never done, but he was obliged to do the same thing over and over again, without end. Yes, he had become sick and tired" (*Ancient Child* 38). In *Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory*, Pramod K. Nayar states that "any work of imagination…offers us a view of the tensions, problems, exploitation, within a society. A work of art—the product of the imagination—helps us understand our real world" (125). In the process of promoting art that does not reflect his true self, Set fails to be true to his artistic self and this brings about feelings of helplessness and estrangement within him. In an interview with Gaetano Prampolini, Momaday describes how an artist is determined by the market. "One of the great risks that all creative people run is to be original because people like to talk a lot of originality. They say, well, you must do this or you must do that; to the extent that a writer or a painter listens to this advice, his creativity is damaged" (203). Erich Fromm's definition of alienation where a person becomes estranged from himself can be seen in the light of Set's slow but deliberate withdrawal. An alienated being, "does not experience himself as the center of his world, as the creator of his own acts—but his acts and their consequences have become his masters, whom he obeys, or whom he

may even worship" (Fromm 117). By not being able to connect with the work he produces, Set inevitably becomes disconnected from his self. This disconnection from his centre affects Set, not just mentally, but physically as well.

Jason, as the voice of the consumer, makes sure that Set paints the kind of painting that is being demanded. An example of this can be seen in their conversation regarding painting, "'When will you do some big things again, large canvases, very bright colours?' Jason asked. 'Is that what they are asking for?' 'Always. And especially from you'" (Momaday, *Ancient Child* 143). In this regard, Marxist's alienation theory can be seen in the internal crisis brought about by the protagonist's desire to produce art as an act of self-fulfilment but prevented from doing so because of the buyers' expectation for a certain kind for painting. Set finds himself trapped within his desire to fulfil the market demands and that of his own. Adhering to the demand of the market pushes Set farther and farther away from his inner self, to the point that it becomes self-destructive. This can be observed in the light of Marx's statement on the alienation of labour. Under the Marxist concept of alienation, there are four basic components covering the human existence, namely, man's relation to the product of his labour; man's relation to his own productive activity; man's alienation from his own species; and the alienation of man from other fellow men (Khan 208). In the case of Set, we can observe that Set is alienated from the product of his work because it is not a true reflection of his self. Secondly, there is alienation in his act of producing a painting for the sole purpose of selling it to satisfy the buyer' demands. Thirdly, because of this, Set loses his essential relation to his being and becomes alienated from himself. He merely exists as a successful artist, painting pictures that are expected of him, while suppressing his desire to paint as he truly wished to. Fourthly, this alienation of self, further branches towards his fellow beings

as well. He withdraws into himself, pushing away Lola and Jason, becoming almost hostile in his behaviour towards them. Set is, thus, alienated from his product of labour and this satisfaction of the external need, further, alienates Set from himself. His mode of production is detached from his self, because of which, he finds himself unable to come into a meaningful relation with himself. Marx explains that, because labour is external to the worker,

> it does not belong to his essential being; that in his work, therefore, he does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind... His labor is therefore not voluntary, but coerced; it is forced labor. It is therefore not the satisfaction of a need; it is merely a means to satisfy needs external to it. (74)

As a result, this inhibits Set's creative voice, compelling him to paint a prescribed format to fulfil the consumers' demand. We can see how the labour of the labourer brings about a sense of alienation because of the disconnection between the individual and the product. Marx's theory of alienation describes the presence of an estrangement between the labourer and his product. However, he also adds that "the estrangement is manifested not only in the result but in the act of production within the producing activity itself" (73). It can be argued that Set may always refuse to fall within the market rules and paint as he desires. But that would mean selling fewer paintings and thereby generate less income. He is aware of the uses of Jason and he employs him because he knows he can help sell his paintings. Thus, we see compliance on the part of Set. This compliance to follow the demands of the world, by denying himself from realising his true potential throws Set into a crisis of the

self. According to Rahel Jaeggi, "the scandal of alienation is that it is alienation from something the self has made. It is our own activities and products—social institutions and relations that we ourselves have produced—that have turned into an *alien power*" (12).

Set is the creator of his present discontent. But while it is important to see his dissatisfaction with his work in the light of Marxist theory between labourer and his product, it cannot simply be bracketed within this one view of man's alienation. Inclusive of this, are other issues that have contributed to his feeling of alienation and his dissatisfaction with the world. Set is the reincarnation of the bear child, and his detachment from his roots, his physical dislocation from his ancestral land, prevents his understanding of the significance of becoming one with his other self, that of the bear. This alienation of Set from his work, then, becomes the mechanism in propelling Set towards an awakening in the search for his centre. Set is not only alienated from his work, but he is also alienated from his land. This dislocation of the protagonist from his land is seen as an impediment, both in *House Made of Dawn* as well as *Ancient Child*. The dislocation of the protagonist delinks him from his familial relations, who, otherwise, would have been the intermediaries in transmitting ancestral knowledge in the absence of his parents. Set is adopted by Bent, a philosophy professor, and is raised in San Francisco, away from his father's Kiowa culture. His alienation, then, can be traced in the deficient or negligible relation he has with regard to his roots. Rahel Jaeggi explains that "an alienated relation is a deficient relation one has to oneself, to the world, and to others" (5). An alienated being is seen experiencing a "double loss of reality" (6), with his self and with the world. Set's feeling of loss lies in rootlessness which obstructs his understanding of himself and the world. At the beginning of *Ancient Child*, Set is unable to remember

the meaning of his name, “Cate had long ago told him something about his name. What? What was it? It lay on the farthest edge of his memory. He had not yet begun to believe in names” (58). For Momaday, to be given a name is to be given an existence. Set’s slow but definitive journey towards the realisation of his name brings him closer towards an understanding of himself. Momaday juxtaposes the story of the nameless boy who wandered into the Piegan camp. Because he had no name, it was easier for the community to erase his existence from their memory. Momaday explains, “if he had spoken something that we could understand, if he had given himself a name or could have named something within our frame of reference, then one could not have doubted his existence” (Schubnell 85). They transformed him from a boy into a bear because it was easier to believe in the existence of a bear than that of a boy with no name. The question “¿ Quien es?” or “Who are you?” is something that needs to be answered by Set. “Are you Set?”, “You Set?”, is a question that he keeps repeating (Momaday, *Ancient Child* 132- 133). He finds himself detached from his being and finds the need to confirm his identity. Momaday states, “I believe that a man is his name. The name and the existence are indivisible...when a man is given a name, existence is given to him too” (Schubnell 85).

For Set, the process of healing and recognition occurs alongside the changes in his paintings. The death of Bent galvanises him into painting something far removed from his usual artwork:

> On the floor, at his feet were paintings, shining up like great facets, still shining wet. They did not express his understanding of the world. Indeed they expressed nothing, only his acknowledgement of the unknown. They were not the productions he had been taught by his

> instructors to make as a serious artist, but they stood for his grief. And more closely than anything he had ever done before, they stood for the condition of his mind and soul. (Momaday, *Ancient Child* 213)

Marx states that the result of alienation leads man to ultimately function as an animal (74). This breakdown is important to the story because it allows Momaday to propel Set towards a journey of healing much like Abel's search for his centre in *House Made of Dawn*. Their search for healing leads them back to their ancestral land and a journey towards reclaiming their traditional heritage. "He has to go back to his time, into the heritage, into the blood memory, into his ancestry. That's where the information he needs exists, and only by going back to that kind of primeval existence can he find his true identity" (Prampolini 203). For Abel, the link between him and his roots is his grandfather, Francisco. Set, on the other hand, finds the link through Grey, the young medicine woman. Grey, in turn, listens to the voice of her grandmother, Koi-ehm-toya, who instructs her from beyond the grave. Their coming to terms with their identity begins with the return to their native land. It is interesting to note that both Abel and Set are orphans which cause a break in the reception of their ancestral knowledge. They are both outside their native land which further aids in the disconnection between them and their roots. For the Native American, land plays an integral role in helping an individual connect with his culture and roots. He is a part of the land as much as the land is a part of him. Their entry into their native land, thus, sets the motion for the process of their healing. Parallel to the story is Momaday's story-telling and his ability to incorporate the dying oral traditions and juxtapose it within the novel.

Both, *House Made of Dawn* as well as *The Ancient Child,* not only describes the protagonists' journey to self-discovery, but it also describes Momaday's journey

in restoring the Native oral tradition by unifying it within a prose narrative schema that is decidedly western.

2.4 Eco-ethics of Momaday:

Land features as an inextricable component in Native American literature. As mentioned earlier, the physical landscape of a community plays an important role in the development of oral tradition. Stories connect the landscape and the imagination of the people, thus, the myth of Tsoai or the Devils Tower, for Momaday, serves not only as a mere story, but it also becomes a process of identifying himself with the transformative nature of the mythical bear boy. Through his connection with the place, Momaday's work centres on this myth of the bear of which he finds himself to be inextricably linked. In an interview with Bettye Givens, Momaday states, "I identify with the bear because I am intimately connected with that story. And so I have this bear power. I turn into a bear every so often. I feel myself becoming a bear, and that's a struggle that I have to face now and then" (90). Momaday plays out this struggle in Set who is on the journey towards becoming a bear. Momaday writes of the connection of man with the non-human world. To become the bear is to re-connect with a world that man was once a part of, but has now distanced himself away from. Momaday writes, "Most people cannot recover nature. At one time, we lived in nature. But somewhere along the way, we were severed from nature. We don't know about them as we once did" (91). He presents an alternative response whereby articulation against the pervasive techno-industrial attitudes towards the treatment of land can be addressed (Schweninger 16). The Native American and their attitude towards land have often been under close scrutiny by scholars who opine that they are either "ecological" or that they are only assumed to be one due to the

pervading stereotype of the 'noble savage' whose relationship with the land supposedly far precedes those of the European settlers. The question of whether Paleo-Indians were responsible for the destruction of thousands of flora and fauna have often been widely debated. Shepard Kerch III contends that neither pre- nor post-contact Native Americans were ecologists or conservationists but has been mislabelled as such (37). This notion of the 'ecological conscious Indian' as a myth perpetrated by the prevailing dichotomy that seeks to view the natives in opposition against the attitude of modern industrial culture, is brought into question by Kerch. While the stereotyping can be seen as a deterrent factor in breaking the us/them dichotomy, Kerch's idea that Native Americans were not 'ecological' have been refuted by critics such as Richard White, Vine Deloria Jr. and Schweninger (38). In *Man Made of Words*, Momaday explores the relationship with the land and the natural environment of the 'Paleo-Indian' during the Pleistocene age, with that of the latter-day man who "has fitted himself far more precisely into the patterns of the wilderness than did his ancient predecessor. He lives on land; he takes his living from it; but he does not destroy it" (32). He explains that the latter-day Native American has come into a fuller consciousness of the importance of the non-human world and as such, their attitudes have undergone a transformation from the predatorial Paleo-Indian stance. Momaday's philosophy of the Native Americans as having a reverential attitude towards the natural world is explained through this simple acknowledgement, "The earth is our mother. The sky is our father" ("First American's" 253). This familial pronouncement attributed to the natural world expresses the inter-connection between the human and the natural world. Man is of the world, and as such, cannot be seen as separate from it. However, exploiting the natural resources without regard to the damage inflicted upon the natural world

separates man from nature, in the sense that, the belief in himself as a superior being separates him from the non-human world. In "The Land Ethic", Aldo Leopold states that, "a land ethic changes the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it. It implies respect for his fellow members, and also respect for the community as such" (413). The distancing of man from land is seen in the character of Abel who can no longer relate himself with his environment. Landscape plays an important role in unifying man with his natural world. Abel's displacement from the land creates a displacement of the self. While he is able to remember his time in the war and the years that followed his leaving, it is the past that eludes him; "This—everything in advance of his going—he could remember whole and in detail. it was the recent past, the intervention of days and years without meaning, of awful calm and collision, time always immediate and confused, that he could not put together in his mind" (Momaday *House Made* 21). The failure to remember the past creates a rift within Abel and his desire to come to an understanding of his self. Set, on the other hand, is seen disconnected from his familial relations. When he receives the telegram bearing the news of his grandmother who is on her deathbed, Set finds that he is unable to recall the grandmother. To quote from the text:

> He was completely at a loss. He knew of no grandmother Kopemah. Obviously this was word from his father's people, but he did not know them. They had nothing to do with him. They were related to him, he supposed, but that was only an accident; they were his relatives, but they were not his family. (*Ancient Child* 51)

Abel's inability to remember his past is similar to Set's inability to remember his family. Both protagonists have been cut off from their land and their roots to a degree

that they have become an outsider. In *House Made of Dawn*, Abel is no longer attuned with the world around him and is unable to speak out. Similarly, Set is unable to express himself through his art and allows the control of his artistic production with the demand of the consumers. Momaday ties this inability to speak or articulate to one's relation with the land. However, this is not specifically tied to the natives alone. In *House Made of Dawn,* Milly remembers her father's relationship with the land:

> The earth where we lived was hard and dry and brick red, and Daddy plowed and planted and watered the land, but in the end there was only a little yield. And it was the same year after year after year, it was always the same, and at last Daddy began to hate the land, began to think of it as some kind of enemy, his very own personal and deadly enemy. I remember he came in from the fields at evening, having been beaten by the land, and he said nothing. He never said anything; he just sat down and thought about his enemy. (108)

Language adds another dimension towards the articulation of man's relation with nature and the inability of Milly's father to speak mirrors his inability to come to terms with a land that he considers to be his 'enemy'. Similarly, Set too is unable to speak:

> It was he who wanted so desperately to speak and could not. To speak seemed the most important and necessary thing in life, to rise from some profound and primitive helplessness to the level of speech; but he was prevented by some monstrous resistance in himself, it seemed. And the most terrible thing was, he did not even know what he wanted to say, had to say, if only he could say it. (*Ancient Child* 73-74)

According to Schweninger, "*place* provides one not only with a sense of self, but also with a sense of history and a sense of community" (144). For Momaday, Tsoai (Devils Tower) becomes the place where he finds an extension of his self. It is in this place that he connects himself with the land through the stories revolving around the mysterious "rock-tree". The stories in the Native American oral tradition, provides a sense of history and a sense of belonging for the writer. Both *House Made of Dawn* and *Ancient Child* discuss the story of the Tsoai and the transformation of the boy into a bear. Momaday's identification of himself with the myth of Tsoai is found embedded within his works. He imagines himself transforming into a bear, coming closer to a primordial existence, much like Set. In describing this recreation of one's place in the world through imagination, Momaday explains:

> Man understands himself in relation to the tree over here and the mountain over here and the river and naturally operates out of that environment, operates immediately out of it. It qualifies his language in innumerable ways. And I think that is basically a moral kind of relationship. In the Indian world, it is almost irrefutably. Man understands that he is obligated in certain ways to the landscape, that he is responsible for it, that he shares the spirit of the place. That's a very important concept for me personally. I have written out of that understanding. (Evers 38)

Because Momaday recognises his affinity with the name Tsoai, he is able to exercise this identification in connecting himself with the land and thereby, with himself. Native Americans consider land to be sacred. In *Man Made of Words,* Momaday 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"

(39). By identifying the connection of man and land, Momaday seeks to put forth the idea of harmony between man and his natural world. According to Anne L. Booth and Harvey M. Jacobs, the Native Americans see themselves not only as part of the land, but that they consider land to be a part of them (259). For Momaday, land acts as a medium of healing. To come into a realisation of land as an inextricable part of the self is to find the centre from a place of displacement. The characters that seem to be alienated find themselves only by returning to the land and finding an affirmation of their part within the landscape. The idea of alienation in Momaday's work is closely connected to the notion of the absence of relation with the land. In order to find themselves, both Abel and Momaday have to leave the spaces presently occupied by them and enter the place that holds historical as well as mythical significance. It is only by appropriating themselves back into their culture and thereby into the land, that the protagonists are able to find meaning. Set, who found himself "out of place in this severe red landscape among the graves of strangers" finds the vision he had long sought when he sees the "image of a great bear, rearing against Tsoai" (*Ancient Child* 104, 312). It is at this moment that he feels "he belonged. Everything there was familiar to him" (312). For Momaday, the natural world is presented as a healer that ultimately heals the protagonists from their 'malady'. Only by appropriating themselves into their own culture, which holds the natural world as sacred, are the protagonists are able to find some kind of meaning in their existence.

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CHAPTER III

ASPECTS OF ALIENATION AND ECO-ETHICS IN THE FICTIONAL WORLD OF LESLIE MARMON SILKO

3.1. Leslie Marmon Silko is considered to be one of the central figures in the Native American literary scene. Silko was born in Albuquerque, New Mexico on 5th March 1948. She is of Laguna Pueblo, Mexican and Anglo-American heritage. She was raised in the Laguna Pueblo Reservation in New Mexico and therefore, has strong ties with her Laguna ancestry which is evidenced in her works. Her first novel *Ceremony* was published in 1977. Both Momaday and Silko explore the process of healing from a state of displacement and disorientation in a world that is hostile and unyielding. While it is understood as a given that Native American traditions rely heavily on oral narrative, in *Ceremony,* Silko brings out the importance of breaching the gap between the old culture and the new. She puts forth the idea that while the old values and traditions are important, it risks growing obsolete and stagnant in the current world. The Native American culture believes in the sacredness of nature and is therefore deeply environmentally conscious. Nature plays a central role in Native American literature. It is an essential part of their everyday world and is inextricably linked to oral tradition. Both animate, as well as the inanimate objects, are equally revered. Silko highlights this importance in *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit.* She states that, "a rock has being or spirit, although we may not understand it. The spirit may differ from the spirit we know in animals or plants or in ourselves. In the end we all originate from the depths of the earth. Perhaps this is how all beings share in the spirit of the Creator" (27). This reasoning is echoed in the works of Naga writers like Easterine Kire, wherein the importance of the relationship between man

and nature is highlighted. Silko's novel *Ceremony* converges as a centre of healing and re-integration of human with the non-human world. It calls for a synthesis of the old and new, in order to find coherence within a world that, otherwise, seem to be distant and fragmented. In *Almanac of the Dead,* Silko moves into a more radical view of a world which needs to be overhauled from the overriding technological and racial oppression faced by indigenous peoples under the white dominant culture. Silko calls for a radical movement that will unite the people under the "one world, many tribes" idea, to strengthen relationships and move towards a reclaiming of the earth that is headed towards destruction (707).

Silko's novel, *Ceremony,* revolves around a young man named Tayo, a World War II veteran, who returns to post-war New Mexico, feeling dispossessed and disoriented. Tayo requires healing from his traumatic experiences, but he cannot be healed by the ancient rituals. Only with the creation of new ceremonies can Tayo be healed. The healing of Tayo and the struggle to bring about a synthesis between tradition and modernity runs parallel with Silko's attempt at developing a narrative that acts as a bridge between the past and the present. Story-telling is one of the foundational bases for the existence of oral narratives. In *Ceremony,* Silko highlights this importance of holding on to stories. She begins:

> I will tell you something about stories,
>
> [he said]
>
> They aren't just entertainment.
>
> Don't be fooled.
>
> They are all we have, you see,
>
> all we have to fight off
>
> illness and death.

You don't have anything

if you don't have stories. (2)

Silko describes stories as contained energies that are alive and capable of change. The old Yupik woman in *Almanac of the Dead,* gathers great surges of energy out of the atmosphere by summoning spirit beings through recitations of stories. Silko writes, "With the stories the old woman was able to assemble powerful forces flowing from the spirit of ancestors" (156). Stories and the need for story-tellers play an important role in the writings of both Leslie Marmon Silko and Naga writer, Easterine Kire. In her novel *Son of the Thundercloud*, Kire writes about the death of story-tellers by the "dark ones" because "they did not want them to transform people's minds with their stories" (63). A similar strain can be observed in *Ceremony,* where Silko talks about certain elements seeking to destroy stories:

Their evil is mighty

but it can't stand up to our stories.

So, they try to destroy the stories

let the stories be confused or forgotten.

They would like that

They would be happy

Because we would be defenceless then. (2)

Interspersed within the novel are stories and myths that run parallel to Tayo's story. Similar to Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*, Silko employs the Laguna Pueblo tradition of story-telling in her novel. A circular narrative can be evidenced at the beginning and the end of the text where the word "sunrise" is used to hold the rest of the text together. Because stories hold an integral place in the Native American life,

they are found scattered throughout the text. Furthermore, the narrative is not only punctuated with myths and lore of the Laguna people, but we also find the Emergence and the Migration tale embedded within the text. Tayo's journey in search of healing and rain runs alongside these two important tales of the Laguna Pueblo tribe. According to Silko, "there are four previous worlds below this world" (*Yellow Woman* 204) and "the *Fifth World* is the world we live in today" (ibid.). To enter the 'Fifth World', the people had to rely on the help of the badger and the antelope. The relationship between animals and human beings thus forms an important part of the Laguna tales. The Emergence and Migration tale not only provide a space for human beings and animals to co-exist, but more importantly, the tales can be understood as an "emergence into a precise cultural identity" (36). In the context of Tayo's journey then, the protagonist must find his cultural identity amidst the growing disillusionment with the world.

Tayo is a part of the new displaced generation. There is tension "between the new, urban Indians cut off from their tribal cultures and the perpetuation of ceremonies by the medicine men" (Gray 370). The educational institution is seen as one of the factors that prepare the younger generation towards a gradual assimilation into the Western culture. They are told that, in order to fully integrate themselves into the White culture, traditions and 'superstition' should be rejected. "They told him, 'Nothing can stop you now except one thing: don't let the people at home hold you back'" (*Ceremony* 51). The Native American culture is a community-based culture with the individual playing an intrinsic part of the communal life. To break away from one's community is to break away from one's identity. This break ultimately results in the feeling of alienation. The individual, separated from his community and unable to find his place in an alien world ultimately leads to the problem of a loss of

meaning. According to Rahel Jaeggi, “alienation does not indicate the absence of a relation but is itself a relation, if a deficient one” (1). If alienation is a relation of relationlessness, the individual’s experience of alienation occurs because he or she is no longer in relation with the world which he or she was once in. In the case of Tayo and Rocky, as well as in Momaday’s Abel and Set, the break in their journey towards a fuller understanding of their culture can be explained as one of the reasons for their growing sense of helplessness and dispossession. As stated by Jaeggi, “An alienated world presents itself to individuals as insignificant and meaningless, as rigidified or impoverished, as a world that is not one’s own, which is to say, a world in which one is not “at home” and over which one can have no influence” (3). Tayo’s relation with the world changes after his traumatic experiences in the war front. He becomes dissociated and disillusioned with the world. From the beginning of the novel, Tayo is presented as a fragmented being. He finds no association between himself and the world. He sees himself as “white smoke”, intangible and listless:

> For a long time he had been white smoke. He did not realize that until he left the hospital, because white smoke had no consciousness of itself. It faded into the white world of their bed sheets and walls; it was sucked away by the words of doctors who tried to talk to the invisible scattered smoke. (*Ceremony* 14)

Tayo is seen in a state of limbo, “He inhabited a gray winter fog on a distant elk mountain where hunters are lost indefinitely and their own bones mark the boundaries” (15). He finds himself to be “hollow”, invisible and inanimate. He finds that he is unable to speak the words that will somehow solidify his state. His words are invisible, coming from a tongue that is, “dry and dead, the carcass of a tiny rodent” (ibid.). Tayo is distanced from his very being. It is only when he sees the

cardboard name tag on the handle of the suitcase that he remembers he has a name. "His name was on the tag and his serial number too. It had been a long time since he had thought about having a name" (16). Names are sacred containers of history and meanings. In *The Names: A Memoir*, N. Scott Momaday begins by introducing himself, "My name is Tsoai-talee. I am, therefore, Tsoai-talee; therefore I am. The story-teller Pohd-lohk gave me the name, Tsoai-talee. He believed that a man's life proceeds from his name, in the way that a river proceeds from its source" (np). For Tayo, forgetting his name is akin to forgetting his existence. Walter J. Ong explains that oral peoples commonly think of names as conveying power over things (32). Tayo's seeming forgetfulness of his name, then, reveals his lack of power. Melvin Seeman, in his essay "On the Meaning of Alienation", provides five meanings for alienation: powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, social isolation and self-estrangement. Tayo finds himself as a disempowered being, alienated not only from the world, but from himself as well. The six years of drought that seems to have struck the land mirrors the drought within Tayo. He recalls cursing away the rain in the dense jungle and believes his words gave life to the curse. Almost as if performing a ritual, Tayo curses the rain in the dense jungle of the Philippines, "He damned the rain until the words were a chant, and he sang it while he crawled through the mud...he wanted the words to make a cloudless sky, pale with a summer sun pressing across wide and empty horizons" (*Ceremony* 12). Words are deeply valued and revered in cultures that are traditionally oral in nature. Since theirs is a culture made of words, due reverence is paid to the utterance of words. In *Orality and Literature,* Ong states:

> oral peoples commonly, and probably universally, consider words to have great power. Sound cannot be sounding without the use of

> power... The fact that oral peoples commonly and in all likelihood universally consider words to have magical potency is clearly tied in, at least unconsciously, with their sense of the word as necessarily spoken, sounded, and hence power-driven. (32)

To further corroborate this statement, Momaday, in *Man Made of Words* explains the importance of words, "Words are spoken with great care and they are heard. They matter and they must not be taken for granted; they must be taken seriously and they must be remembered" (15). Tayo believes his words have caused the drought in the land which propels him to move towards bringing about an end to the existing drought. The myth of the Reed Woman and her sister, Corn Woman, runs parallel with the occurrence of the drought. By juxtaposing myths alongside Tayo's story, Silko attempts to include oral mythic narratives within the novel as a way of re-acculturating one back to one's roots. In *Ceremony,* the characters have already assimilated themselves into the culture of the coloniser. While assimilation into the colonisers' culture becomes inevitable, the characters' desire to find their identity within a culture alien from their own becomes problematic. Rocky believes everything the school teaches him and slowly removes himself from his native bindings. Enlisting in the US army was his biggest opportunity to get away from home and into the new world. "He was already thinking of the years ahead and the new places and the people that were waiting for him in the future he had lived for since he first began to believe in the word "someday" the way white people do" (*Ceremony* 73). Rocky's mother encourages him to concentrate on his education because she believes that the knowledge of the white men would make him powerful. To capture that sense of power, one has to assimilate into a culture that is alien, and Rocky was more than willing to do that. After a year in boarding school, Tayo

observes that Rocky "deliberately avoided the old-time ways" and declared them as superstitions (51). Tayo, on the other hand, is not only caught between his mixed raced identities, but he is also caught between the old and the new values. Unlike Rocky, Tayo is sensitive to his native traditions and keeps hold of the stories his grandmother told him, "Everywhere he looked, he saw a world made of stories, the long ago, time immemorial stories as old grandma called them" (95). But in spite of this, he is unable to escape the modern day malady that has captured the lives of many young people of his generation. The rejection of the old ways has caught up with them and furthermore, the experiences in the war front have added to the already prevailing sense of disillusionment. The modernist notion of a disenchanted fragmented being is seen in the figure of Tayo who is unable to immerse himself into his culture and suffers as a result of this. The feeling of belongingness and stability is missing. Their history has been a history of displacement and dislocation, but the presence of a certain cultural consciousness has always kept the community together. The present generation, however, seems to lean away from their roots and the desire to fit into the white man's culture presents a new dilemma. They believed that by behaving like the white man, they would finally find acceptance. This belief in the superiority of the white man leads them to reject the essence of their very being. Furthermore, this notion of a good life in a white world is appropriated by families who believe that the old ways have no place in the world. In their search for power, they reject what is truly and essentially theirs. The result is that the characters are neither at home in their native place nor do they find acceptance among the white people. As soldiers, Tayo and his friends were respected when they wore their uniform. People looked at their uniform and accepted them. They were treated as soldiers, without being subjected to any kind of racism. Having experienced this, it

becomes difficult to once again be subject to scrutiny on the colour of their skin. Their short experience as a soldier ends and with the return to their civilian clothing and they find it difficult to adjust to the real world where they are treated as inferior beings. There is a sense of helplessness and powerlessness. Jaeggi's explanation that alienation is a relation of relationlessness can be corroborated through the various experiences of the characters:

> They blamed themselves just like the way they blamed themselves for losing the land the white people took. They never thought to blame the white people for any of it; they wanted white people for their friends. They never saw that it was the white people who gave them that feeling and that it was white people who took it away again when the war was over. (43)

The 'feeling' here is the false sense of belongingness that the soldiers were showered upon during the war years. Similar to E.R. Braithwaite's post-war experience where his black skin comes between him and his desire to find a job, Tayo and the rest of the Native American soldiers face racism which had been kept in abeyance during the war years. In *Almanac of the Dead*, Menardo, an indigenous Mexican denies his identity and deliberately detaches himself from his roots, much like Rocky in *Ceremony*. As a young boy, Menardo is taunted for his 'flat nose', "a slang name the Indians were called" (258). He becomes acutely conscious of his dark skin and 'flat nose' removes himself from his native connections in order to fit in with his peers. Menardo finds his place in the neo-colonial world by engaging in securities and insurance business and rising as a powerful businessman. His transition, however, alters Menardo's attitude towards the minorities. By appropriating the coloniser's attitude, Menardo uproots himself from his cultural heritage. The mixed heritage of

Tayo becomes a target of shame and jealousy in *Ceremony*. His mother's dalliance with a white man becomes the talk of the community. Abandoned by his mother and raised by her family, he is always reminded of the stigma he carries in his skin. If shame plays a role in the attitude of his aunt's treatment towards Tayo, Emo's jealousy towards him stems from the desire to be like the white man. Emo views Tayo, who is part-white, to have reached halfway towards becoming like one of them. He tries to mask his frustration and anger under the guise of derision. While on the one hand, he rails at the way the Europeans took over their land, on the other, he boasts of killing the Japanese soldiers during the war and voices his desire to destroy them. Emo does not seem to realise the irony of his words. The 'us-them/other' dichotomy of western rationalist thinking is instilled into his mind, so much so, that Emo does not realise that he is appropriating the very 'othering' of him by the colonisers towards the Japanese. In the foreword to Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, Ziauddin Sardar writes:

> It is the internalization, or rather as Fanon calls it *epidermalization*, of this inferiority that concerns him. When the black man comes into contact with the white world he goes through an experience of sensitization. His ego collapses. His self-esteem evaporates. He ceases to be a self-motivated person. The entire purpose of his behavior is to emulate the white man, to become like him, and thus hope to be accepted as a man. (xiii)

To be a man, was to be white. They saw themselves through the eyes of the white men who deemed them sub-par. In *Almanac of the Dead,* Ferro remembers rubbing white chunks of clay all over his hands and arms with to make himself lighter (182). Root, on the other hand, is not uncomfortable with his mixed heritage because he felt

that, “if you weren’t born white, you were forced to see differences; or if you weren’t born what they call normal, or if you got injured, then you were left to explore the world of the different” (203). Most colonised peoples, however, believed the only way to be considered equals would be to emulate the colonisers’ behaviour. Thus, while Tayo struggles between his mixed heritages, Emo views the ‘other’ as “the best”, something he considered himself to be:

> Emo had liked what they showed him: big mortar shells that blew trucks to pieces; jagged steel flakes that exploded from the grenades; the way the flame thrower melted a rifle into a shapeless lump. He understood right away; he knew what they wanted. He was the best, they told him; some men didn’t like to feel the quiver of the man they were killing; some men got sick when they smelled the blood. But he was the best; he was one of them. The best. United States Army. (62)

This psychological division of the colonised as a result of the colonisers’ presence is voiced by Temsula Ao, in her book, *The Ao-Naga Oral Tradition.* She writes that the growing education system caused critical changes among the younger generation Nagas who rejected the old ways of life which seemed “obsolete and primitive” (186). She further adds, “They began to look at themselves through other people’s eyes and the superficiality of obvious comparisons created in their minds a sense of confusion and conflict...They became increasingly indifferent to the tradition, as a result of which a psychological divide was being created among the people” (ibid.). Emo and Rocky both believe in the concept of a white ideal, but their progress towards attaining this ideal deviates from each other. Emo is the antagonist in the novel, submerged under the influence of the “destroyers”. He relishes the killing of the Japanese soldiers in the war and carries with him a pouch with the teeth of the

soldiers he'd killed, displaying it to the people who'd listen to his war stories. He is not as affected by war as is Tayo. He veers towards chaos and destruction that ultimately brings about the death of his comrades.

Tayo's experience in the war-front blurs the notion of race. He sees his uncle Josiah in the figure of the Japanese soldier and finds it difficult to kill him. Tayo is presented as an estranged being, but this estrangement has been in Tayo long before the war. His mixed-heritage creates an estrangement between him and his family. He finds himself alienated from his Laguna-White culture, two cultures that are simultaneously in contact and conflict (Chavkin 10). This feeling of alienation further intensifies with the death of Rocky and the onset of the post-war trauma. He becomes detached from his surroundings, seeing himself as "white smoke", able to discern only the outlines of his surroundings. Tayo is seen suffering from an illness that cannot be cured by modern medicine or by the old medicine man Ku'oosh. Like Momaday's protagonist Abel, in *House Made of Dawn,* Tayo flounders about, trying to find a way out of his predicament. The distance between him and his ancestral knowledge prevents Tayo from finding his way home. As stated in the novel,

> Distances and days existed in themselves then; they all had a story. They were not barriers. If a person wanted to get to the moon, there was a way; it all depended on whether you knew the directions—exactly which way to go and what to do to get there; it depended on whether you knew the stories of how others before you had gone. He had believed in the stories for a long time, until the teachers at Indian school taught him not to believe in that kind of "nonsense". (19)

The old ceremonial rites performed by Ku'oosh do not provide the healing required by Tayo and other war veterans who, like Tayo, find difficulty in navigating their

lives following the war. A ceremonial cleansing was necessary in order to heal oneself from the effect of wars. Such cleansing was often done in the past after the killing of enemies, or if one had touched the dead bodies of the slain enemies:

> They had things
> they must do
> otherwise
> K'oo'ko would haunt their dreams
> with her great fangs and
> everything would be endangered.
> maybe the rain wouldn't come
> or the deer would go away.... (37)

But the old medicine man, Ku'oosh, is unable to cure Tayo through the old ceremonies. Ku'oosh explains, "There are some things we can't cure like we used to...not since the white people came. The others who had the Scalp Ceremony, some of them are not better either" (38). The experience of the soldiers in the war haunts them even after their release. It was not just the war, but everything they'd seen, "the cities, the tall buildings, the noise and the lights, the power of their weapons and machines. They were never the same after that" (169). The intermingling of different cultures prevents the old ceremonies from working. Because the environment had changed to accommodate a culture that was no longer homogenous in nature, new ceremonies had to be developed for the people who were caught in a crisis of identity. According to Rahel Jaeggi, "Self alienation can be understood as a way of *not having oneself at one's command*. Being alienated from oneself means, in other words, being *inaccessible to oneself* in what one wants and does" (152). Tayo sees himself not as a person, but as "brittle red clay, slipping away with the wind"; as

smoke, “drifting away in the currents of the air...until it exists no more” (*Ceremony* 27, 17). Tayo views not only himself, but also the world as outlines, never whole. In his fragmented state, his view of the world becomes fragmented. It is Betonie, the mixed-blooded Navajo healer, who eventually leads Tayo towards the path of healing. New ceremonies are necessitated for the new generations who are caught between the changes taking place in the land. Through Betonie, Tayo becomes aware of the tales of the destroyers whose only purpose was to bring havoc and destruction in the land. It slowly dawns on Tayo that the white people are merely the tools of the destroyers who revel in the destruction of the land. The stories eventually provide the escape that Tayo desperately seeks. Silko declares that the world is run amok by the ‘destroyers’’ magic. They bring forth the destruction of people, animals, land and the natural resources and it is here that we find Silko’s philosophy. The white people are caught up in this very web of destruction unaware of being the destroyer’s puppets. The destructive nature of the destroyers played through the colonisers is appropriated by the colonised. Emo speaks the language of the destroyers. He relishes narrating his exploits in the war. Wishing further destruction, Emo states, “We blew them all to hell. We should’ve dropped bombs on all the rest and blown them off the face of the earth” (61). Betonie explains that the cause for the mindless destruction brought upon the land was by “Indian witchery” who invented the white people. Within the mythic narrative, the witch foretells the coming of the “white skin people”:

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.

The deer and bear are objects

They see no life. (135)

The colonialists' attitude towards the non-human world is foretold by the witch and the reverence of Native Americans towards their land and the natural world is destroyed by the arrival of the colonisers. Silko describes this anthropocentric nature of the European colonisers and their fear of the unknown in *Almanac of the Dead*:

> The elders used to argue that this was one of the most dangerous qualities of the Europeans: Europeans suffered a sort of blindness to the world. To them, a "rock" was just a "rock" wherever they found it, despite obvious differences in shape, density, color, or the position of the rock relative to all things around it. The Europeans, whether they spoke Spanish or English, could often be heard complaining in frightened tones that the hills and canyons looked the same to them, and they could not remember if the dark volcanic hills in the distance were the same dark hills they'd marched past hours earlier. (224)

The inability to distinguish the differences is directed not only towards the natural world, but it is also seen extended towards the human sphere, more specifically, towards the 'inferior' colonised groups. It is almost a forewarning, when Calabazas' states, "Those who can't learn to appreciate the world's differences won't make it. They'll die" (203).

This western notion of the 'superior' rational man is further inculcated into their educational system, resulting in the rejection of the traditional attitude towards nature and the environment. This distancing of oneself away from the ancestral knowledge to imbibe the newer form of education can be observed in Silko's novel, *Almanac of the Dead*. One of the many characters in the novel, Sterling, remembers his aunt teaching him about nature, of how one could smell the rain clouds long before it could be seen. He realises that the problem of forgetting lay in sending the children to boarding schools which acted as a separation between the person and land. To quote from the text, "Sterling knew that sending the children away to boarding schools was the main problem. He and the other children had to learn what they could about the kachinas and the ways to pray or greet the deer, other animals, and plants during summer vacation, which were too short" (88). In *Ceremony,* When Rocky is about to kill the injured deer, Tayo covers its head with his jacket, because it was customary to do so before gutting a deer. "They sprinkled the cornmeal on the nose and fed the deer's spirit. They had to show their love and respect, their appreciation; otherwise, the deer would be offended, and they would not come to die for them the following year" (51). Rocky is, however, embarrassed by their actions because he considered their actions to be superstitions. He was drawn to the civilizing effects of the western culture and pushed towards assimilating into the new 'better' culture. The contrasting nature of the Native American cultural values against the Western anthropocentric notion of the enlightened man creates tension for the new generation who had to navigate through the myriad cultural ethos. As a child, Tayo kills flies because his teacher taught him they were bad and carried diseases. In contrast, his uncle Josiah instructs him through story-telling about how the fly intervened on behalf of the Laguna people to ask forgiveness from the mother of the

people for their transgressions. However, during the war, Tayo forgets this instruction and "cursed their sticky feet and wet mouths, and when he could reach them he had smashed them between his hands" (*Ceremony* 102). His finds himself unable to face the light of day and tells his aunt, "The light makes me vomit" (31). Tayo relationship with the world mirrors his relationship with himself. Although he is sensitive to the tradition of the Laguna Pueblo, Tayo is caught within this world of the "white skin people" and thus finds himself appropriating their values. These western values were disseminated through the missionaries and the educational institutions. In *Almanac of the Dead*, Silko writes, "The local Catholic priest had done a good job of slandering the old beliefs about animal, plant, and rock spirit-beings, or what the priest called the Devil" (156).

According to Jaeggi:

> Self-appropriation is mediated by an appropriation of the world. Since the relation to self ...can be articulated only in terms of the relation one has to one's desires, interests and actions—which are directed toward the world—self appropriation always occurs as an appropriation of the world. Hence self-alienation is also alienation from the world, and, conversely, alienation from the world is self-alienation. (152)

It is only when Tayo immerses into the new ceremony that he finds himself becoming attuned to the world around him:

> He wanted to walk until he recognised himself again. Grasshoppers buzzed out of the weeds ahead of him; they were fading to a dry yellow colour from their bright green color of spring...he stepped carefully, pushing the toe of his boot into the weeds first to make sure

> the grasshoppers were gone before he set his foot down into the crackling leathery stalks of dead sunflowers. (*Ceremony* 155)

Tayo's reverence for the natural world slowly returns as he begins to re-integrate himself into his culture. He begins to find coherence and harmony which had once seemed tangled and knotted. He finds himself able not only to face the light, but also sings a song to show his reverence:

> Sunrise!
> We come at sunrise
> to greet you.
> We call you
> at sunrise.
> Father of the clouds
> you are beautiful
> at sunrise.
> Sunrise! (182)

The healing ceremony allows Tayo to return to the past and re-immerse himself into his culture. That being said, it does not mean the individual is returning to an unaffected, unalienated self. His re-integration into his culture allows for a self-realisation. Self-realization is a "process of 'giving oneself reality' in the world that transcends the distinctions between inner and outer and between an inner life and an outer world (Jaeggi 152).

Tayo's realisation that the world is a unifying factor mirrors the basis of deep ecology. In his essay "The Deep Ecology Movement," Bill Devall explains that, "the person is not above or outside of nature" but "is part of creation ongoing" (128). This premise encompasses Silko's idea of a creation that is in continuous motion. It also

applies to the idea of 'unity' rather than 'dualism'. Silko critiques white domination and their religion that sought to separate the individual from the community. The lives of the Native American tribe centres around the community rather than the individual. Silko writes that the shame of one individual reflected on the entire community (*Ceremony* 69). The shame brought about by Tayo's mother is deeply felt by her sister who takes every opportunity to remind Tayo of the incessant suffering his mother caused the community. Within this communal life, we also find reverence shown towards animate as well as inanimate objects. Silko writes strongly about the destruction of the earth and allows it to manifest through her characters:

> 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 pack of dogs and their guns. It happened again and again, and the people and to watch, unable to save or to protect any of those things that were so important to them. (203)

The novel describes the mining of uranium and the destruction of land that was used as testing grounds for the first atomic bomb. The use of natural resources to destroy nature itself is critiqued in the novel:

> The grey stone was streaked with powdery yellow uranium, bright and alive as pollen; veins of sooty black formed lines with the yellow, making mountain ranges and rivers across the stone. But they had taken these beautiful rocks from deep within earth and they had laid them in a monstrous design, realising destruction on a scale only they could have dreamed. (246)

A similar strain can be seen in *Almanac of the Dead*, where Silko describes the decision of the Tribal Council to go forward with the uranium mining because it

would provide for jobs but more importantly because the government did not give them any choice. The old-timers who were in the minority, were against the decision, citing that it was so near to the holy place of Emergence. They were overruled and thus became "the first of the Pueblos to realize wealth from something terrible done to the earth" (34). There is indictment against the destruction of the natural world and retaliation on the part of nature. *Almanac of the Dead* features multiple characters, with various plotlines shifting across multiple lands but inter-connected in their desire for a revolution. The destruction of the earth is one of the bases for their shared interest in taking back what was theirs. The 'destroyers' that Silko talks about in *Ceremony* is also mentioned in *Almanac* as being the cause for all the bloodshed, violence and destruction. The 'destroyers' as mentioned earlier, are not the Europeans, but is an evil that resides in the world seeking to destroy it. In the *Almanac*, Silko takes this further by showing how people from various cultures inter-mingled and responded in a land that was highly inter-racial. Violence takes up a large part of the novel, highlighting upon the dispossessed and the marginalised. The novel calls for an awakening from the complacency that has settled among the people of the land and to bring about a revolution. *Ceremony* focuses primarily on the healing of Tayo through ceremonies that need to be invented in order to keep up with the changing times. The relationship between the human and the non-human world is re-affirmed through ceremonies. According to Adam Sol, *Almanac of the Dead* differs radically from *Ceremony.* He states:

> *Ceremony* focuses on one man's struggle; *Almanac* tackles the struggles of whole peoples-Native American peoples especially, but also African American peoples, Latino peoples, women, the poor of all races. And, perhaps most significant, where *Ceremony* uplifts,

> *Almanac* overturns. *Almanac* similarly calls for a return to native ways of viewing the earth and mankind's place in it, but this is only one aspect of a whole system of change. Instead of invoking the healing ceremony, Almanac calls for an upheaval in the world order and a dramatic revision of world history. (24)

Almanac of the Dead is described as an encyclopaedic narrative, containing information on the Pueblo and Yaqui peoples. There is a constant questioning of the colonisers' motives and of the destruction that followed their settlement. Unlike *Ceremony,* the questions in *Almanac* are not merely rhetorical but it builds up into a revolution over the course of the novel:

> The time had come when people were beginning to sense impending disaster and to see signs all around them—great upheavals of the earth that cracked open mountains and crushed man-made walls. Great winds would flatten houses, and floods driven by great winds would drown thousands. All of man's computers and "high technology" could do nothing in the face of earth's power. (424-425)

There is a foreshadowing of the retaliation of earth against the powers that had taken over the world. Silko presents enraged gods and spirits of the old that has been cast aside by Christianity and technology and presents a picture of impending doom, "The forces were harsh. A great many people would suffer and die. All ideas and beliefs of the Europeans would gradually wither and drop away. A great many fools like Menardo would die pretending they were white men" (511). Silko introduces 'eco-warriors', such as "Earth Avenger", "Eco-coyote" and "Green Vengeance Group" whose sole purpose was to go "Back to the Pleistocene" (689). These eco-warriors employed the terminal and the dying and the "eco-true believers" who believed in a

radical overhauling of the system by destroying the dominant capitalist class who were taking over and degrading the colonised lands. In part six of the novel, an eco-warrior describes the impending future where following the destruction of nature, only the rich will survive:

> The new enemies, she said, were the space station and biosphere tycoons who were rapidly depleting rare species of plants, birds and animals so the richest people on earth could bail out of the pollution and revolutions and retreat to orbiting paradise islands of glass and steel. What few species and what little pure water and pure air still remained on earth would be harvested for these space colonies. (728)

The bombing of the Glen Canyon Dam is seen as a radical response towards "an icon of capitalism's triumph over nature" (O'Meara 70). *Almanac of the Dead* describes the state of the dispossessed and the marginalised, both of the human and the non-human sphere and a way of uniting together to bring about a complete change in the relationship between human and human, and human and the non-human world. The relationship between environmental degradation and the inequalities following the growing capitalist economy is addressed. The Native Americans' association with the environment have persisted since time immemorial. The deterioration of nature is seen closely linked with the global economic and political inequalities. According to Peter Wenz:

> Environmental concerns involve relationships not only among people who live in the same society at the same time; but also among people who live in different societies at the same time, between people of the present and those of the future, between human and nonhuman animals, and between people and the biosphere in general. (248)

The presence of many significant injustices in the society prevents the step towards forming an environmental justice system. Robert Bullard presents five principal colonizing processes. Firstly, they enter the host society and economy involuntarily; secondly, their native culture is destroyed; thirdly, imposition of white-dominated bureaucratic restrictions upon the colonised; fourthly, the dominant group uses institutional racism to justify its actions and finally, a dual or "split labor market" emerges based on ethnicity and race (255). The racial oppression and the devaluation of human lives are extended towards the non-human world. Silko presents the exploitation of the marginalised and the minorities alongside the destruction of the environment. The gathering of people from all over the world at The International Holistic Healers Convention portrays the unifying idea that will eventually overturn the existing crisis of inequality and discrimination of the 'other'. Wenz explains that the modern social order requires the cooperation of the vast majority in a free society. In order to achieve this cooperation, "the social order must be perceived as tolerably just."

The deep ecological idea of "biological equalitarianism" is developed in the writings of Leslie Marmon Silko. The extremist stand taken by the 'eco-warriors' mirrors the deep ecologists' revolutionary defence of the earth as opposed to the conventional lobbying efforts of environmental professionals. Ramachandra Guha writes that deep ecology, "proposes a militant defense of "mother Earth", an unflinching opposition to human attacks on undisturbed wilderness" (281). The first point put forward by Arne Naess in his development for the notion of Deep Ecology claims that "The well-being and flourishing of human and nonhuman Life on Earth have value in themselves…These values are independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes" (439).

Landscape plays an important role in Native American culture and is seen in Native American writings. Nature no longer remains a mere backdrop in the texts but is seen as a character connecting the past, the present and the future. This timelessness of nature maintained and revered by the Native Americans shatter with the arrival of the colonisers who sought to dominate the so-called 'wild' lands of the native dwellers. Silko describes the wanton disregard for animal life in the characters of the two patrolmen. While Tayo reveres the presence of the mountain lion, the two patrolmen seek to kill the animal for sport. Silko brings out the difference between the white man and the Native American's way of perceiving the natural world. The anthropocentric view of the patrol men inadvertently helps Tayo escape and find his lost cattle. Tayo's awareness of the unifying forces of nature initiates his path towards freedom and healing. This realisation follows the second point stressed by Naess which contends that the various life forms have value in themselves (ibid.). Tayo realises the connection between the past and the present and finally understands Betonie's description for the need of a new ceremony. Tayo finally sees the pattern that had been eluding him. He finds a connection between uranium mines, the bombings and the blurring of the distinction between the Japanese soldiers and his uncle. His dislocated state had hidden the patterns that were being created in the world. His defragmented state saw the patterns as a tangled knot without any coherence and made him question his existence and sanity. This same blurring comes into realisation for Sterling in *Almanac of the Dead:*

> Sterling had begun to realise that people he had been used to calling "Mexicans" were really remnants of different kinds of Indians. But what had remained of what was Indians was in appearance only—the skin and the hair and the eyes. The cheekbones and nose like eagles

> and hawks. They had lost contact with their tribes and their ancestors' worlds. (88)

There are no sharp lines demarcating one from the 'other'. Both *Ceremony* and *Almanac of the Dead* discuss the transcending of boundaries. Calabazas tells Root, "We don't believe in boundaries. Borders. Nothing like that. We are here thousands of years before the first whites. We are here before maps or quit claims. We know where we belong on this earth. We have always moved freely" (*Almanac* 216). Similarly, Tayo is brought into the realisation of a cosmic unity that transcends time and space:

> He cried the relief he felt at finally seeing the pattern, the way all stories fit together—the old stories, the war stories, their stories—to become the story that was still being told. He was not crazy: he had never been crazy. He had only seen and heard the world as it always was: no boundaries, only transitions through all distances and time. (*Ceremony* 246)

The old and the ancient ceremonies need to be reinvented in order to work its magic. It should move with the times and evolve in order to survive. This is also one of the reasons why we see the text interspersed with the Laguna Pueblo myths and folklore. By going back to the stories, Tayo finds his connection with nature and enters into a self-realization. The world no longer appears in 'outlines' and Tayo finds himself growing in tune with his environment. Silko writes, "He was aware of the centre beneath him...It was pulling him back to the earth, where the core was cool and silent as mountain stone, and even with the noise and pain in the head he knew it would be: a returning rather than a separation" (201). As stressed earlier, alienation is a relation of relationlessness. Tayo's return here implies a return to an understanding and

appreciation of the world he had once grown in and which he had grown out of, as an adult. Silko applies this return to oneself on a global scale in *Almanac of the Dead,* where she proposes for a "return of all tribal lands" (15). The notion of returning also applies to the notion of returning to nature which is an essential feature of not just Silko and Momaday, but of most Native American writers as well. Silko tries to create a paradigm shift whereby the oral tradition of the Laguna people can survive within the current cultural context. She stresses on the need for an ideological change that will eventually allow a greater appreciation for life and the various life forms. While Silko seeks to highlight the various ecological changes that have been wrought upon the Native American land, on a deeper level, her works emphasises on the importance of unifying the human race with the natural world.

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CHAPTER IV

TEMSULA AO'S RUMINATION OF THE METAPHYSICS OF ECO-ETHICS

4.1 The Nagas have always relied on oral narratives as a means of preserving social, historical and religious records. Oral narratives, as mentioned in the previous chapters, include stories, songs, song-poems which were employed as a means of passing down traditional knowledge to the younger generations. The survival of such narratives requires the collective memory of the community. With the political upheavals that came upon Nagaland and with the displacement of various tribes, and the huge cultural changes brought about with the entry of European colonisers, oral tradition lost its tenacious hold on the people and changed the relationship from a verbal form of communication to that of a text-based medium. The educational institutions, primarily set up in order to disseminate the teachings of Christianity, grew in importance as more and more people discovered the benefits of learning the coloniser's language. The educated Nagas used this tool to voice their discontent with the prevailing political system. With the shifting importance given towards the written word, oral narratives were pushed to the periphery. As seen in Native American cultures, assimilation of the coloniser's culture came into place for the Nagas as well. Naga literature is still a fairly new term, employed to designate the works of Naga writers who have tried to capture and record the space inhabited by the changing Naga society. Temsula Ao is one of the pioneers of Naga literature. A poet and a story-teller, Temsula Ao made her foray into the literary scene with the publication of a collection of poems titled *Songs That Tell* (1988). Her other publications include, *Songs that Try to Say* (1992), *Songs of Many Moods* (1995), *The Ao Naga Oral Tradition* (2000), *Songs from Here and There* (2003), *These Hills*

called Home: Stories from a War Zone (2006), *Songs from the Other Life* (2007), *Laburnum for my Head* (2009), *Once Upon a Life* (2013) and *On Being a Naga* (2014). Her writings seek to capture the prevailing condition of the Naga society, centring on the question of identity and what it means to be a Naga today. At the same time, she also tries to highlight the importance of remembering the past.

4.2 Temsula Ao's collection of short stories titled *These Hills Called Home: Stories from a War Zone* describes the stormy years of the 'Indo-Naga' conflict. In her preface titled "Lest We Forget", Ao writes, "It was as though a great cataclysmic upheaval threw up many realities for the Nagas within which they are still struggling to settle for a legitimate identity. It was almost like a birth by fire" (x). The stories in this particular volume detail the precarious life of the Naga people following the aftermath of war of 1944. The stories describe the ordinary people and their struggles as they try to cope with the daily violence in their lands. Temsula Ao creates strong female characters who subvert the notion of a damsel in distress. The stories also illustrate the presence of violence and trauma faced by ordinary people. The politics of identity continue to remain in the grey area as the shifting times distort the idea of what it means to be a 'Naga'. In her essay *Women Writing in Times of Violence*, Tilottoma Misra says:

> For it is in the nature of trauma to blur the boundaries between 'the knowable and the unknowable', so that it becomes difficult to distinguish between truth and fiction. It is exactly because of this that literary discourses rather than historical narratives are better modes of representing violent events. Though memory plays an important role in historical representations too, in literature, memory with all its

> wonderful possibilities, forms the main basis of all the 'truth' that it may represent. (249)

These Hills Called Home: Stories from a War Zone depicts the life of the everyday people caught up in the surge of an insurrection they could barely comprehend. "…the entire land was caught in the new wave of patriotic fervour that swept the imagination of the people and plunged them into a struggle which many did not even understand" (2-3).

In "Soaba", Ao describes the growing unrest of the late fifties and the power play that developed in the process. The village system that saw towards the homogenising of the tribals through communal service soon saw the migration of people to small newly developing towns. "A new environment was emerging and overtaking the old ways, the youngsters growing up in such places began to think of themselves as the new generation" (10). The educated Nagas discovered that their education could get them better work and higher wages than the meagre earnings and back-breaking work of the village life. For the younger generations, progress meant moving away from a rural agricultural set-up and into the 'promising' urban sectors. This resulted in the large migration of village people to urban settlements. The new age also brought along with it new vocabularies as the people became well acquainted with words like "convoy", "groupings" and "curfews" (ibid.). Often, migration was forced upon different tribes under the term 'grouping' which sought to displace the people from their ancestral homes in order to force compliance of the villages. Under such situations, the tribals were often tortured for information on the so-called undergrounds. Incompliance often led to death which increased the atmosphere of fear, distrust and further dissent. According to the author:

> The word 'grouping' had a much more sinister implication; it meant that whole villages could be dislodged from their ancestral sites and herded into new ones, making it more convenient for the security forces to guard them day and night. (Ao 11)

By uprooting them from the land of their birth and origin, their identity that was rooted in their ancestral land gets shaken. This forced migration which curbed the freedom of the villagers to work in their own land added to the powerlessness and alienation of the people. As mentioned in the first chapter, Melvin Seeman includes powerlessness as one of the meanings under alienation. Powerlessness is the inability to control one's destiny. Ao writes:

> It was the most humiliating insult that was inflicted on the Naga psyche by forcibly uprooting them from the soil of their origin and being, and confining them in an alien environment, denying them access to their fields, restricting them from their routine activities and most importantly, demonstrating to them that the 'freedom' they enjoyed could so easily be robbed at gunpoint by the 'invading' army. (11)

As disempowered subjects, they become alienated beings. The forced restriction on their daily engagement with the world dissociates them from the familiar, thus, leading to meaninglessness. The lands occupied by the villages are seen determined by external forces, and the lack of control over their lives brings about a sense of alienation. Rahel Jaeggi explains that one of the central points of the phenomenon described as alienation is the inter-connection between "power's being turned into impotence and the loss of meaningful involvement in the world" (23).

For the Naga people, identity began with the clan and then with the village. However with the foreign wave that crashed in the Naga Hills, their identity as a tribe was set aside as the new 'identity' of the 'Naga' merged the numerous tribesmen into one homogenising factor. In the article, "Cogitating for a Better Deal", Monalisa Changkija says:

> I believe that Nagas live in numerous worlds. Due to several factors and forces, we have reached a point wherein we have been compelled and propelled to live different realities in different worlds. Much as we would like to believe that we are one homogenous people, we are not. Although we are homogenous racially, we are not so politically, economically, socially, psychologically, mentally, and not even culturally. If we study the realities of our people living even in the same places, we will discover that we do live in different worlds…Naga society lives in several worlds—some in the distant past, some half-way, some in-between and some far removed from it. (281)

In "Soaba", because of the power struggle between the two warring groups, the government set up a new group of people to counter the rebel movements. The government plays into the economic sector whereby unemployed Nagas get recruited as Home Guards of the government. With assurances of economic stability, Ao describes how the people unwittingly tangle themselves into the political agendas of the government. As illustrated in "Soaba":

> The environment was created by the government; they needed a band of die-hards who would be their 'extra-arms' beyond the law and civil rights and who would also 'guide' their forces who were so pitiably

> uninformed, not only about the terrain, on which they were fighting and dying, but also about a bunch of people so alien to them that for all they knew, they could have come from a different planet! (12)

Imlichuba, otherwise known as Boss, symbolises the new class of power-hungry people that emerged as the third limb of the government. His place in the "new hierarchy" and the environment that he is plunged into slowly transforms him. "His personal appearance too began to change; he started wearing new and fashionable clothes and flashy rings on his fingers" (13). According to Khandakar Shahin Ahmed, "The idea of 'Naga identity' becomes evasive because of the working of bio-politics through economic framework. The all pervasive nature of the bio-politics somehow makes a Naga man oblivious of his ethnic cause or Naga nationalism" (para. 15). By the 1960s, the emergence of a new generation of Nagas soon stripped the old Naga ideologies and sought for greener pastures in the social, political and economic spheres. The change in the station of Imlichuba is mirrored in his clothes and lifestyle. Seeking to emulate the mannerisms of the 'privileged' class, Imlichuba, also known as Boss, allows himself to be assimilated into a culture that is alien. As an ally to a government that was violently opposed to the rebel groups, Imlichuba was placed in a position of power. His preference to be addressed as "Boss" reveals his sense of superiority among the others. His wife Imtila is also forced to change accordingly. In keeping with the new status of her husband, Imtila is required to wear expensive clothes and jewellery and entertain the guests. Setting himself above the rest, Imlichuba surrounds himself with guards and secures fences around his house. He alienates himself from the rest of the people and forces the same upon his wife, thus alienating her from her friends and relatives.

> She could no longer call her home her personal domain, there was no peace and quiet for her or the children because her husband's lackeys seemed to be everywhere, inside the house, in the compound and some even had the audacity to enter their bedroom on the pretext of giving a message to Boss. (Ao 15)

Imtila too, experiences powerlessness, one of the forms of alienation. Her engagement with the world is solely determined by her husband and thus unable to appropriate her own life. According to Rahel Jaeggi, "The concept of appropriation refers to a way of establishing relations to oneself and to the world at one's command…Alienation can then be understood as an impairment of acts of appropriation" (36). In the face of obstruction of such a relation between the self and the world, Imtila is seen as an alienated being. Her husband, Imlichuba, is among the "urban proletariat" who is "materially and ideologically corrupted by the close contact with the colonial power" (Zahar 100). He becomes estranged from his wife and children and allows himself to be drawn into an unfamiliar world that he tries so hard to be a part of. A new environment is created, comprising of boisterous late-night parties and continuous supply of alcohol. In the beginning, Imlichuba is unaware of his slow descent into an alienated being. In trying to fit into the new system, the colonised imitates the culture of the colonizers which he believes to be better than the place he presently occupies. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon writes, "The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle" (9). Imclichuba's inclusion into the government as a commander of the so-called flying squad gives him a sense of power. He sees himself as better and above the rest of the people, which ultimately alters his behaviour

towards them. He masks his feeling of inferiority by dressing in the garb of the colonizers and emulating their mannerisms which he believes will mark him as equals with his superiors. Unfortunately, his drunken parties and brash behaviour becomes more of a concern for his superiors. The scene leading to the death of Supiba (Soaba) reveals the depth of his estrangement with the world. His inability to distinguish the innocent Supiba from his wife and the death of Supiba finally takes its toll on Imlichuba:

> Imtila began to notice the effects of these changes on the behavior of her estranged husband. He became listless and disinterested in anything around him; it was as if a vital string had snapped in his evil genius when he pulled the trigger that night. Like a man awakened from a long trance Boss stole around the house as if he was trying to familiarise himself with a new environment. (20)

He becomes aware of his estrangement with his family and environment; however, he is unable to arrive at a solution. His relation with himself and the world is deficient. This "impoverishment of the relation to self and world" is a distinctive feature of alienation and is seen in the character of Imlichuba. He becomes an indifferent being, defamiliarized with his environment. Unlike Momaday's Abel and Silko's Tayo, Imlichuba does not come to terms either with himself or his environment.

While Kire describes the co-mingling of the Naga spirituality with the modern, Ao brings a hardened side of the people in her stories. She journeys from the struggle for independence to a new era where the old ideologies are discarded as new players appear in the scene. In her preface to her book, Ao writes, "Nagaland's struggle for self-determination started with high idealism and romantic notions of

fervent nationalism, but it somehow got re-written into one of disappointment and disillusionment because it became the very thing it sought to overcome" (x). Her words echo the disenchantment of the Naga people. The political power struggle gives away as the rush for individual economic stability takes precedence. The village system that sought to work on a communal basis crumbles as individual interest begins to expand.

In "A New Chapter", Temsula Ao writes of the new class of emerging Nagas living in towns. Nungsang's entry into the world of army contractors forces him to seek the help of a distant cousin named Merenla. Her dependence on her agricultural produce for her livelihood is however forgotten as Nungsang's desire to be a politician takes precedence. The people migrating and settling in towns is seen severing ties with their roots. The focus on the individual becomes a primary concern for people living in towns with the increasing change in the way of living. Merenla comes to this realization when she finds that she has been forgotten by her rich relative who had begun his journey by buying her vegetables, "Slowly and painfully, she began to see that people who go away from villages think and act differently even if they are relatives" (144). As observed in the previous chapters, the break from familial relations is echoed in the works of Momaday and Silko. While their protagonists find healing with the return to their homeland, there is no such hope for Nungsang who finds himself caught in a wave that threatens to engulf him. The distance between the village life and that of towns is not merely physical. Temsula writes of two separate worlds inhabited by the Nagas. As opposed to the village scenes, the people living in the urban areas are seen living fractured lives that are totally separated from the values instilled in the people living in villages. There is much unscrupulous dealing and above all, the notion of individualism is seen firmly

entrenched in the psyche of the urban people. The breaking of communal relationship gives way to individualism which further exacerbates in the face of capitalistic tendencies. Familial ties are forgotten as Merenla becomes just another worker for the smooth functioning of Nungsang's capitalistic ambitions. The prevailing situation presents Nungsang with the idea of becoming an army contractor. The presence of the army gives the impetus towards a profit bound business. As mentioned in the text:

> It was to procure 'supplies' for these army establishments that a new class quickly emerged. They came to be known as army contractors who now entered the space between the opposing factions and were poised to make their fortunes from the spoils of war. They became the new hierarchy now involving in Naga society in the wake of the upheaval. These people had easy access to the high command and enjoyed privileges not available to ordinary citizens. (123)

A new hierarchy develops which privileges the ones in the upper rung. Individualistic ideas become entrenched in the Naga psyche as more people look for opportunities beyond their existing purview. Bhandari's position is one that Nungsang aspires to be in. Bhandari's rise from a position of a driver to that of an army contractor gives Nungsang the impetus to move forward as he imagines a life that will be different from the present. However, he also has to deal with the underground and their 'collections'. In this regard, he arranges a meeting with his old friend Wati who was already a member of the underground faction. In exchange for not levying 'taxes' on Nungsang, Wati proposes that he find a government job for his boss's son. Since the names of the underground members were available to the government authority, Nungsang voices his fear that it might be difficult for the son to get a job. His fears were, however, quickly dispersed by Wati. Ao writes, "The

other man quickly countered this by saying that the father's name could be changed and better still, the name of his village, too, could be changed" (130). The changing times bring about different notions of identity. When once it was rooted in one's village and the clan to which they belonged, it becomes irrelevant in the present age. The name of one's village and one's father's name becomes dispensable in the pursuit of government jobs. It is ironic that the father, who is an officer in the underground faction, would wish a government job for his son, against whom the fight is with. Ideologies are misplaced and reality becomes detached from one's roots. Nungsang's political ambitions leave Merenla stranded with her pumpkin patch which she had planted in order to meet Nungsang's demands. She is reminded of the increasing distance between the older and younger generations, and of the difference in their ways:

> …she was brought up on the tradition that family ties were more sacrosanct than any others and besides, he did have a business obligation to her as well. Slowly and painfully, she began to see that people who go away from villages think and act differently even if they are relatives. She said to herself over and over again that a fellow villager would never have treated her in this manner. (144)

Nungsang's narrative comes to a halt as Ao shifts her focus on the simple woman who had only done what she knew best, only to be ignored once the individual had accumulated his own gains. Nungsang's extension of help towards Merenla began only as a means to an end. And once achieved, no regard is given to the woman who had not only planted pumpkins on her own land, but had leased a neighbour's plot as well. Merenla and Nungsang symbolise two different worlds. The new band of rising Nagas is vastly different in their outlook on life. Emboldened by the notion of easy

money, it becomes more and more difficult to turn back to the quiet life of the village. Merenla breaks her attachment with Nungsang and the 'pumpkin Merenla' moniker placed by the villagers by throwing away the rotting pumpkins in plain sight of the villagers. Her demonstration acts as a kind of cleansing, an implication of the unclean attachment with the young contractor, who had shamelessly exploited her good nature. She resumes her life in the village, far removed from the rumblings of the land elsewhere. Ao reveals the detachment of two worlds in the conclusion "Life in the village went on as before, unobtrusively merged into the rhythm of age-old village life, far away from the political permutations and combinations forming and re-forming elsewhere in the land" (147)

Various aspects are of the Naga lives are brought for scrutiny. Ao describes a tougher and cynical side of the Naga life where the politics of identity become blurred as each tries to outdo the other in the race for economic stability. The two opposing factors—the losing ideologies of the Naga freedom fighters and the ignorance of the new generation—combine to create a place of disenchantment for the ordinary people who are trapped in between. In this race for power, Ao writes, "there are no winners, only victims and the results can only be measured in human terms" (Ao x).

4.3 A brief glance into the trajectory of her poems, beginning with her first volume, *Songs that Tell* and culminating in her latest collection*, Songs from the Other Life* gives us an idea of Ao's journey from her initial attempt at articulation into a fuller awareness and acknowledgement of her tribal roots. In the preface to *Book of Songs: Collected poems 1988-2007*, Ao states:

> The fifth book *Songs from the Other Life* occupies a special place in my heart and I believe that it marks a significant phase in my poetic career because the inspiration for the book has been derived from my own Oral tradition which has informed my psyche and given me a definite identity. (xlii)

Temsula Ao incorporates the method of story-telling in most of her poems, more so in her fifth book. *Songs from the Other Life* contains poems on Ao-Naga folklores, myths and history. It is an attempt on the part of the poet to search for one's roots and go back beyond the existence of the written word. In *Songs that Try to Say*, Ao begins with a question, "Why do Songs live?" (63). Songs and poems are intimately connected with oral tradition. Their existence is extremely fragile because oral tradition is always one generation removed from extinction (Momaday 10). Ao's question stems from a desire to understand the durability of songs that exist beyond the narrator. Towards the end of the book, in her poem "Songs that do not Die," she comes to understand that the living nature of songs is due to their ability to revive, rejuvenate, rekindle and celebrate life. Their existence lies in their life-giving property, binding together life with life, thus, creating a circular act that allows no outlet for an end.

> I've known
> A haunting breeds of songs
> Which endure
> Beyond the heard melody.
> These are songs
> Which reverberate
> With soul-sparkling scintillation

To revitalize

Limping hearts,

And rejuvenate

Ageing souls…

…These are songs

Which sing

Of life

That never dies

That is why

These are songs

That do not die. (1-11, 20-26)

The living nature of words is also voiced by the old story-teller in "The Old Story-Teller."

When my time came I told Stories

As though they ran in my blood

Because each telling revitalized

My life-force

And each story reinforced

My racial reminiscence. (9-14)

Stories find its place in the memories of the people, but the fragility of oral narratives cannot be overlooked. The story-teller recalls the days when his/her grandfather taught him/her the importance of story-telling:

Grandfather constantly warned

That forgetting the stories

Would be catastrophic

We would lose our history,

Territory and most certainly

Our intrinsic identity. (27-32)

Ao writes about the disappearing art of story-telling that was once an essential part of the Naga tradition. With the changing times, the magic of story-telling loses its hold on people. It is harder still for the old story-teller as his/her grandsons disregard the importance of tradition:

But now a new era has dawned.

Insidiously displacing the old.

My own grandsons dismiss

Our stories as ancient gibberish

From the dark ages, outmoded

In the present times and ask

Who needs rambling stories

When books will do just fine? (39-46)

There is sadness and an overwhelming frustration in not being able to instil in them, the importance of listening to stories. Storytelling was a "proud legacy", something to be handed down to the next generation, but with the absence of listeners, the stories remain untold, slowly fading away as old age erodes the memory of the story-teller. Ao writes poems as a storyteller would narrate a story. The poems in *Songs from the Other Life* contain the formula of story-telling as it tries to revive history

and tradition of the Ao- Naga tribe. Tilottoma Misra writes in her introduction to the book *An Oxford Anthology of Writings from North-East India*: *Poetry and Essays*, "...the new literature that is emerging from Nagaland is not all soaked in blood. The old storytelling tradition, which is common to all oral cultures of indigenous people, has been creatively integrated into modern literary genres to give a distinct identity to the literature of this region" (16).

Ao uses this blend of traditional story-telling and poetry to recreate a past that allows the readers to experience an almost forgotten history. *Songs from the Other Life* delves into oral tradition and attempts to archive stories through the act of writing. At the same time, it also questions the old system that is decidedly patriarchal in nature. Oral literature or oral narratives defined the custom and laws of the people. The fluidity of such a culture allowed a certain malleability which helped in keeping up with the changing times. This system came to a halt with the entry of the written script which sought for a more rigid and less flexible way of dealing with the Naga social order. In the face of a growing tendency to learn the ways of the West, oral tradition was sidelined. The movement of the younger generations away from the morung system and into a new system of learning broke the connection of transmitting culture and tradition through oral narratives. The rigidity of the written world was further imposed on the oral culture which limited the growth of oral tradition by enveloping its laws within a capsule. While synthesis of the past and the present can be observed in the celebrations of festivals and the modifications in traditional attires and various tribal artefacts, this synthesis is still desired when it comes to tribal laws and customs which continue to remain stagnant. The leap into the race to create inroads towards a building modern society impacted not only the culture and traditions of the Nagas, but also had adverse effects on the land. In her

third volume, *Songs of Many Moods,* the poem "An Old Tree" describes the decrepit state of a lone tree. The poem is narrated by the tree as it describes its dilapidated features, "Gnarled in limbs/ And shorn of leaves". The tree identifies itself with an ageing human body:

My roots are exposed

Like varicose veins on aged calves

And dead branches on my trunk

Resemble brittle, blown out hair

On a balding head. (10-14)

The use of 'baldness' is also seen in the poem "The Bald Giant" from the fourth volume, *Songs from Here and There*. Ao personifies the degeneration of a hill that was once green and full. Using baldness as a metaphor to describe the dwindling forests, Ao writes

All that is now gone

All of him is brown

From base to crown

And his sides are furrowed

Where logs had rolled. (19-23)

The hills have now become decrepit and old because of human activities. It no longer looks inviting and the poet feels a menace emanating from the barren hills. Aware of the destruction wrought upon the hills, the poet is wary of nature's retaliation and fears it will ultimately take her down with it. In "Some Principles of Ecocriticism", William Howarth states that "nature makes direct statements, without implications or analysis" (71). The fear of the poet is a fear of retaliation from nature for the callous

destruction wrought upon nature by humans. In the poem, “Lesson of the Mountain,” the poet writes about the beauty of nature that lies untouched by human hands. For the poet, the mountain appears to be a curious mixture of strength and mystery. The desire to know the secrets of the mountain pushes the poet into taking the challenge of climbing the mountain, despite the hardships. Only when she reaches the top does she realise that the mountain holds no great secret. By covering the distance between the mountain and herself, the speaker realises the majesty of nature and realises the secret to marvel and be at one with the natural world. In both the Native American writers as well as the Naga writers, there is a shared ground in their desire to return to a state of balance with their environment and retain their cultural heritage without it growing stagnant.

Temsula Ao’s poem “Distance” in her first volume, *Songs that Tell*, describes man’s desire for domination. William Rueckert states, “In ecology, man’s tragic flaw is his anthropocentric (as opposed to biocentric) vision, and his compulsion to conquer, humanize, domesticate, violate, and exploit every natural thing” (113). This view is echoed in the poem:

> Fathers and sons
>
> Antagonists and intolerant
>
> Struggling for supremacy
>
> Over an earth
>
> Both want to straddle. (4-8)

In “A Strange Place”, Ao writes:

> This is a place where
>
> Nations vie
>
> For mastery of skies

Unheeding to the cries

Of birds

Drowned

In the whirr of jets

Travelling

Faster than sound. (5-13)

Both these poems reflect on the nature of domination. The sounds of birds are lost in the "whirr of jets". Man is no longer attuned to the plight of his natural world. In his desire for domination, which extends to the skies as well, man becomes apathetic towards the non-human world. The poem further goes on to describe the division of man on the basis of class:

This is a place where

A berlin wall divides

The haves and have-nots

Into tribal enclaves

With skyscrapers and slums

Co-existing

In incongruous proximity

Each insulated

Against the other

By self imposed exile. (28-37)

In their very co-existence, there is estrangement between man and man. The difference in their economic positions acts as a wall between the two, creating an insulated space that denies the presence of the other.

And the estrangement

Becoming stranger still

Making this world

Unrecognisable as the place

Where thinking mortals live. (47-51)

The space thus occupied by man becomes a strange land. In the rush towards domination and mastery of the world, man ultimately creates a division, not only between human and non-human world, but between man and man. As seen in the beginning of the poem, the path towards this separation begins with the silencing of the natural world, or in this case, the noise of the jets drowns the sound of the birds. The movement towards modernization follows this with the separation of man from his fellow being and ultimately creates a separation with the world.

Karen J. Warren claims that "nature is a feminist issue" because "'nature' (referring to nonhuman animals, plants and ecosystems) is included among those Others who/that have been unjustifiably exploited and dominated" (1). In the poem "Lament for Earth", the poet personifies the forest as a woman, "verdant, virgin, vibrant/ With tall trees/ In majestic splendor" (3-5). Even in its stillness, one can hear the sounds of life reverberating through the forest, like the cries of birds and "Little creatures/ Frolicking/ From earth to sky" (11-13). In the next stanza, however, there is a sudden shift from the earlier portrayal of the forest. The sounds of life are brought to an end:

Alas for the forest

Which now lies silent

Stunned and stumped

With the evidence

Of her rape.

As on her breasts

The elephants trample

The lorries rumble

Loaded with her treasures

Bound for the mills

At the foothills. (21-31)

The poet goes on to narrate the story of a river, "clear and content/ Resplendent/ With little fishes" (36-38) while the thirsty deer laps up her water as if it were honey. This peaceful state does not remain for long. As with the forest, the river too is muddied and destroyed:

With the leavings

Of the two-legged animal

Who bleached her banks

And bombed her depths

Foraging for their little fishes. (47-51)

Both the forest and the river, described as sisters, have been ravaged by "the two-legged animal" (43). The trees are cut and elephants deployed to carry the logs to the mills, while the fishes are bombed and bleached. In both cases, the domination of man over the plant and animal lives can be seen. What is evident here is the domination of the 'other'. The earth, externalized as the 'other' is seen as something to be controlled. Colonial remnants can be traced in the plundering of "treasures/Bound for the mills". The lands that were yet to be colonized were seen a lush, filled with treasures waiting to be plundered. By creating an us/ them dichotomy, it becomes easier to exploit the 'other'. According to Bennett and Royle:

> The concept of externality links with questions of colonialism and postcolonialism in particular since this 'elsewhere' is typically a colony whose natural resources can be exploited for the economic benefit of the colonizers regardless of the effect on the indigenous population (whether human or not). (143)

This notion of externality becomes dangerous since everything is interconnected. Man is a part of the world; therefore, destroying his habitat is akin to destroying himself. The patriarchal construct that sees woman as the weaker sex, to be controlled and dominated, extends to nature by identifying nature with woman. Bennett and Royle states, "In Western literary and other culture, 'nature' is often fundamentally distinguished from the human and, at the same time, gendered as female and even as maternal (as in the phrase 'Mother Nature')" (ibid). Here, the forest and the river, hitherto untouched, have been ravaged in the hands of man. The result is that they are unable to give birth to new life. Seen here, the destruction of the earth has gone on to such an extent that their renewable and regenerative powers have been exhausted, "No life stirs in her belly now/ The bomb/ And the bleaching powder/ Have left her with no tomorrow" ("Lament" 59-62). The earth is no longer lush. She has grown "Old and decrepit/ Before her time" (79-80).

By equating the destruction of earth with rape, the poet demotes the 'thinking' 'rational' man from his pedestal. Instead of using 'man', Ao uses the term "two-legged animal". She brings him at par with the rest of the animal world, although, unlike the rest of the animals, man is seen as a destructive being. By failing to acknowledge his part in the ecosystem, man pushes towards ecocide. In, "The Revolt of Nature", Martin Horkheimer states that, "man has been stripped of all aims except self preservation. He tries to transform everything within reach into a means to that

end" (221). Man's desensitization towards nature adds to the looming environmental crisis. The poem is ominous in its foretelling of the end of nature. There is no more life within her to be destroyed, no more treasure to be plundered. The poem ends on a note of grief, "Grieve for the rape of and earth/ that was once verdant, vibrant/ virgin" ("Lament" 81-83). The poet laments on the destruction of the earth that can never be regenerated.

In her second volume *Songs that Try to Say,* the poem "Earthquake" acts as a response to the cries of the grieving earth. It is no longer docile, but "contorts" and rises like a powerful entity, capable of destruction:

> It is no portent
> Of new life.
> But of death and disaster
> For those who dwell
> Upon her swell. (6-10)

The discourse of man as rational and woman as emotional have served as a demarcation between the two. Furthermore, this lack of rationalization is attributed to the non-human world as well, thus delineating the 'superior' man from the 'inferior' woman/nature. Val Plumwood, states that, "the supremacy accorded an oppositionally construed reason is the key to the anthropocentrism of the Western tradition" ("Nature, Self" 6). Here too, the poet provides feminine attributes to the earth; a woman in the throes of childbirth, except that this is a birth of destruction. Ao uses terms such as 'hysterical' 'unpredictable' 'temperamental', a societal construct that views woman as an emotional being, and therefore inferior to the 'rational' man. It is this internalization of the 'irrational', 'capricious' woman, bound by emotions, that allows the justification of patriarchy. This 'inferior' nature is,

however, capable of bringing about large scale destruction. The earth is no longer seen as docile or submissive. This act of bringing about submission leans to a great part towards the anthropocentric thinking of the Western world. In the poem, "Bonsai", man's attempt at subjugating nature is explored:

Giant trees
Stunted by man's ingenuity
In search of new beauty.

Orchards
Reduced to produce
Only atrophies of fruits.

Earth's vastness
Diminished and displayed
In tiny potted space. (1-9)

The desire to own the world is manifested in the bonsai through which he is able to create his own miniature world, something that he can control. The vastness of the world with all its vagaries that cannot be contained by man is projected at the bonsai, whose growth is shaped and controlled by human hands.

In 'Stone-people from Lungterok", Ao continues to draw the image of earth as a maternal figure:

LUNGTEROK
The six Stones
Where the progenitors
And forebears

Of the stone-people

Were Born

Out of the womb

Of the earth. (1-8)

In this poem, the poet goes back to the emergence story of the Ao tribe. The Ao's believe that their ancestors emerged out of the earth at a place called Lungterok, which literally translated means 'six stones'. According to the myth, out of the six stones, three were male and the other three, female. The different clans of the Ao tribes trace their origins to one of these stones. Embedded within this emergence story is the crucial evidence of man's inter-connection with nature. The worship and reverence of stones have an integral place in the world of the Nagas. The Stones were supposed to be infused with powers and the worship of such stones was an important part of the pre-Christian Naga world. Sacrifices were performed and the stones, in turn, would reveal useful information about the future, or aid them during wars with other villages (Mills 217-19). The idea that the progenitors of the Ao Nagas were stones, reveal the sacred connection of man and nature. Similarly, in the poem "When a Stone Wept", the poet explores the human characteristics attributed to inanimate objects in the Naga cosmology. In an introductory note to the poem, the poet writes about the Ao Nagas belief in the reproductory powers of stones and explores this myth in the poem. Both man and stones are believed to have emerged or birthed by stones:

And one dreadful thundery night

Little stones of various sizes issued

From her huge expanse making her

'Mother' not only to man but the little stones too. (25-28)

The very beginnings of man are attached to the earth, an invisible umbilical cord tying the human and the non-human world. The connection between man and the natural world is evidenced in the folktales of the Nagas. The poem, "Stone-People from Lungterok" presents to the reader, a journey from emergence to discovery. It describes how they navigated their way to find meanings and connections in nature. According to G.J.V. Prasad, this poem signals the poet's "increasingly close interrogation and recovery and reconstruction of her community's mythology and traditions" (xxix). Derek Wall states that, "Christianity, and to a lesser extent Judaism and Islam, have been blamed for separating humanity and nature as well as promoting the idea that nature was created for humanity to exploit" (181). By revisiting and reconstructing the myths of the Ao community, Temsula Ao attempts to refocus on relearning the past. The poem gives the reader brief insights into the way the pre-colonial Nagas interpreted certain events, such as how the practice of head-hunting began:

STONE-PEOPLE,
The Polyglots
Knowledgeable
In birds' language
And animal discourse.
The students,
Who learned from ants
The art of carving
Heads of enemies
As trophies of war. ("Stone-People" 14-23)

Such stories are found embedded within the poem. Similarly, the belief in the spirit world is narrated in the sixth stanza, whereby even the inanimate are infused with life:

STONE-PEOPLE

The worshippers

Of unknown, unseen Spirits

Of trees and forests,

Of stones and rivers…. (42-46)

In *The Ao Naga Oral Tradition,* Temsula Ao states that myth-making "can be viewed as early man's attempts at rationalising the powers of the "supernatural beings' vis-à-vis his real existence" (80). Through poetry, Ao re-imagines the story of her ancestors. The final lines end on a questioning note:

STONE-PEOPLE

Savage and sage

Who sprang out of Lungterok,

Was the birth adult when the stone broke?

Or are the STONE-PEOPLE yet to come of age? ("Stone People" 52-56)

The poet wonders at the progress made since the emergence. The division between savage and sage is obvious. The colonisers regarded the colonised as 'savages' since they did not conform to their western modes of thinking and behaviour. According to Val Plumwood, the European colonisers' notion of progress meant "the progressive overcoming, or control of, this 'barbarian' non-human or semi-human sphere by the rational sphere of European culture and 'modernity'"

("Decolonizing Relationships" 52-53). Since then, however, there has been a radical shift regarding the pervasive dominant western ideology. The indigenous peoples, it has come to be observed, had their own distinct way of functioning in a society that was cohesive and highly evolved. This notion of progress which generally conforms to the rational western thought is placed against the pre-colonial system that operated in accordance to their interpretation of the spaces occupied.

The poem, "My Hills" can be read as a study in postcolonial ecocriticism. The space once occupied by the British colonisers became a place of dispute between the Nagas and the Indian government. Changes that began to take shape with the occupation of the British took a rather violent turn with their departure. No proper agreement was established by the colonisers concerning the place of Nagaland within post-independent India. The result was a fierce clash between the Indian government and the Nagas leading to years of conflict and negotiations. Temsula Ao begins her poem by remarking on the alteration of her hills. The poet reveals a proprietary feeling with regard to the hills she has grown in and loved. Similar to the poem, "Lament for the Earth", Ao begins by painting a description of the hills as she had once known them to be:

> Once they hummed
> With bird-song
> And happy gurgling brooks
> Like running silver
> With shoals of many fish.
>
> The trees were many
> Happy, verdant, green.... (4-10)

The sounds of the birds and brooks indicate the presence of life. There is an abundance of fishes and trees and nature seems to be "happy". This state is broken and the happy sounds are now replaced by the "staccato / Of sophisticated weaponry". The imagery of fullness and abundance has now been replaced by silence and emptiness, "The rivers are running red/ The hillsides are bare/ And the seasons/ have lost their magic" (158). The sound of nature can no longer be heard in the "staccato" of weapons, just as the bird songs are overpowered by the "whirr of jets" ("A Strange Place"). The hills become alien for the poet who no longer finds familiarity in its altered state. In two simple lines, Ao states her pre-occupation, "But to-day,/ I no longer know my hills" ("My Hills"19-20). Rahel Jaeggi describes alienation, not merely in the absence of a relation, but states, "Alienation describes not the absence, but the quality of a relation. Formulated paradoxically, alienation is a relation of relationlessness" (25). The poet's alienation from her familiar hills can be read in the light of the above statement. Violence is etched not only in the image of rivers running red or in the sounds of weapons, but is also seen in the image of bare hills and silence of birds. The poet is caught between the political and ecological changes that alter not only the physical landscape of the hills, but the mindscape of the poet as well:

> ...the seasons
> Have lost their magic
>
> Because
> The very essence
> Of my hills
> Are lost

Forever----. (“My Hills” 26-32)

In “Literature and Ecology”, William Rueckert explores the similarities between literature and nature, specifically on the function of poetry. He draws parallels between poetry and green plants and their function as reservoirs of energy. The energy of the sun is likened to creative imagination. He states:

> Literature in general and individual works in particular are one among many human suns. We need to discover ways of using this renewable energy-source to keep that other ultimate energy-source (upon which all life in the natural biosphere, and human communities, including human life, depends) flowing into the biosphere. (109)

Rueckert stresses on the importance of incorporating green studies in literature, since we are all ultimately a part of the world. The deterioration and destruction of the earth need to be addressed through literature. Failure to do so would ultimately lead to the loss of an environment in which to write and teach. Temsula Ao is very conscious of the impact on the environment in the name of ‘progress’. In her essay “On Being a Naga”, Ao proposes the need to look inwards into the past, “and examine to what extent the ‘Progressive Culture’ of the few towns of Nagaland can really relate to the needs of their lives” (8). Ao questions the widening gap between the rural and urban folks and the “superficial affluence” brought by “imported systems” (ibid.). These gaps divide one from the other, and although “all the new money, political influence and modern lifestyle seem to reside in the urban areas, the real essence of our Naga-ness still remain in the heart of the land: the villages” (ibid.). The characters described in the short stories are all middle-class urban folks and they are the ones that seem to be alienated the most. They are away from their village and submerged in an alien environment where they are made aware of their

'lack'. Ao further adds, "The transition from being a proud and insular people into a people without confident moorings and a proper identity did not take too long, while insidiously a form of second-class citizenry was being imposed on the Nagas in the emerging modern set-up" (5). Removal from the land, forcibly as well as voluntarily, separates one from his roots. The indigenous knowledge gets lost during the transition and one gets acclimatized into a culture that is alien. They are then seen imbibing the colonizers' culture and in the process, their attitude towards nature and the environment comes under criticism in the writings of Temsula Ao. As already discussed above, the colonized subject appropriates the colonizing system and directs it towards the non-human world. In the quest for a 'better' life, nature is seen as a means to an end. The ramification of the actions of man on nature is mirrored in poems such as "Lament for Earth", "A Strange Place" and "The Balding Giant". Ao's suggests for a revisit into one's culture that will necessitate the movement towards a more eco-centric attitude. Both animate and inanimate objects feature as an important part in the daily lives of the pre-Christian Nagas. The very foundation of the origin story of the Ao tribe in "Stone-People from Lungterok" reveals the egalitarian relationship between man and nature. The Nagas, insulated within their own world, applied meaning to unknown occurrences according to their own interpretation and experiences. Thus, while there have been diverse ways of understanding nature, "there is no consistent 'colonial mind', and no simple account to be given of colonial ideologies of nature" (Adams 18). This understanding of nature saw a shift with colonisers' idea of rationalism. William M. Adams explains the four dimensions of rationalism in his essay "Nature and the Colonial Mind"—first, the development of science and technology; second, the expansion of a capitalist economy; third, a formal hierarchical organisation, that is, "the creation of

executive government, translating social action into rationally organized action" and finally, the elaboration of a formal legal system "to manage social conflict and promote the predictability and calculability of the consequences of social action" (22).

Environmental Ethics calls for an 'eco-consciousness' instead of an 'ego-consciousness'. For Ao, the underlying values in the pre-Christian/pre-colonial relationship of the Nagas with nature need to be re-visited and re-accessed. Karen J. Warren states that, "Commitment to the moral considerability of nonhuman animals and/or nature is what makes an environmental ethic an *environmental* ethic" (74). By imbuing the non-human world with human attributes, Ao uses trees, forests, rivers, mountains and stones to voice their discontent. Through her writings, Ao allows the impersonal to become personal. Nature is seen as having intrinsic value in itself as opposed to the anthropocentric utilitarian attitude. The first point of Deep Ecology which acknowledges the intrinsic value of human and nonhuman life on Earth can be seen in the philosophy of Temsula Ao. She calls for an empathetic attitude towards the non-human world. Furthermore, the appreciation for life quality rather than an adherence to an increasing higher standard of living is evidenced in her writing which is another feature of Deep Ecology. Temsula Ao's poetic ruminations reveal an increasing need for a change in the attitude towards the existing environment. The rapid destruction of nature pressed forward by western anthropocentric philosophy need to be addressed through a revisiting of one's culture which is implicit in its inextricable link between the human and non-human world. The alienation of man from his environment as a result of the effects of colonialism and capitalism is shown in contrast with the people in the villages whose lives remain seemingly untouched by the wave of 'progress' in the urban areas. While it becomes impossible to reject

progress and resurrect the past, Ao's writing suggests towards an embracing of the past and an employment of the old values where the unity of man and nature is accepted as a given.

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CHAPTER V

GRAMMAR OF RECONCILIATION WITH DESTINY IN EASTERINE KIRE

5. 1 The Nagas have primarily used oral tradition as a means of archiving history and it is not until recent times that strides have been made towards what is now termed as Naga literature. While numerous books have been published concerning politics and culture, only a few have attempted to focus on the literary sphere. Easterine Kire is one of the first Naga writers in English. Her book, *A Naga Village Remembered* (2003) is considered to be the first Naga novel in English to be published. She has been awarded the *Governor's Award for Excellence* in Naga Literature in the year 2011 and awarded the *Catalan PEN International Free Voice* Award in 2013. She also won the Hindu Literary Prize for her novel *When the River Sleeps* in 2016.

Easterine Kire's works largely concentrate on bridging the gap between the old worldview and the new. The changes brought into Naga society as a result of contact with the outside world have been manifold. While there have been many positive changes, contact with the British colonisers and the American missionaries, however, drastically changed the way the Nagas lived and perceived the world around them. With the introduction of education and modern progress, the oral narratives began to diminish. With so much social, cultural and political changes, the continuity of oral tradition could only extend so far before the larger forces of education and introduction of new laws took over. With the coming of the British in the Naga Hills, new sets of acts and laws were introduced which destabilised the existing power of the village law council where relations were restored through negotiations and dialogue. Since the art of storytelling is interwoven in the fabric of

oral tradition, the changing times soon saw the deterioration of a very important part of a Naga culture. The precarious system of oral narratives began to disappear with the introduction to the written word. Old modes of living were replaced by new ones and along with that, the written word gained precedence over the spoken word. In the present day, with the last reserves of oral tradition fast dwindling, it becomes necessary to document and preserve the stories of the people before they disappear forever. Easterine Kire's works primarily focus on narrating the history of the people. In doing so, she attempts to preserve the past and prevent its disappearance. With modernity fast overtaking the cultural habits long revered in the Naga society, it is only apt that stories are now slowly being scripted and archived for the future generations.

Much like Momaday and Silko's attempt to bring about an understanding of the past and the present, Easterine Kire's storytelling, attempts to bring about a synthesis between the old and the new. As mentioned earlier, the arrival of the British brought numerous changes among the Nagas, the most significant being one of religion. The introduction of Christianity brought about an almost complete change in the way the Nagas navigated around their understanding of the world. The colonizers came not only with Christian notions of salvation, but they also brought along with them their understanding of their version of civilization and progress. The natives with their 'pagan' practices were to be civilized. As voiced by Mary Clark, "The Nagas, once civilized and Christianised, will make a manly, worthy people" (qtd. in Eaton 13). This 'othering' of the natives by the colonisers extends towards their treatment of nature as well. In this context, Val Plumwood explains the idea of 'hyper-separation'. According to her, "Hyper-separation means defining the dominant identity emphatically against, or in opposition to, the subordinated identity,

by exclusion of their real or supposed qualities. The function of hyper-separation is to mark out the Other for separate and inferior treatment" (54). Differentiating humans as separate from nature blurs the importance of the human-nature relationship. It puts into motion the idea of man as being outside of nature, thereby denying the connection and devaluing the unity of man and nature. Nature becomes a "hyper-separate lower order" (ibid). The presumed notion that nature and animals lack consciousness excludes them from the 'thinking', 'rational' world of man. Man's dependency on nature is relegated to the background, creating a place of denial and ultimately positioning itself above the non-human sphere. Drawing parallels between the colonisers' treatment of the natives and nature, Plumwood explains how both nature and the native people alike, are clubbed together on the premise that they are sub-par to the otherwise 'superior' and 'civilized' coloniser. "Differences are judged", she explains, "as grounds of inferiority, not as welcome and intriguing signs of diversity" (58). By creating an us-them/superior-inferior distinction, one becomes desensitized towards the so-called 'other', setting forth a dangerous precedent as evidenced in the treatment of the natives by the colonisers in the introductory chapter.

This desensitization is seen in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, where the once mighty Okonkwo becomes just another 'material' for the white District Commissioner. He reduces Okonkwo's life into a mere paragraph, reasoning to himself, "there was so much else to include and one must be firm in cutting out details" (150). By cutting and reducing the details of the native people, he erases them from his narrative, including only the ones that he thinks will reflect the title of his book, 'The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger'. Since the Igbo community, like most of the indigenous peoples, followed the oral tradition, the

balance tips towards the coloniser whose written narrative will be the one that will shape and structure how the Igbo people will be perceived by the rest of the world. Encountering a culture that based itself on the tradition of oral transmission for their continuity was seen as 'primitive', 'savage' and 'uncivilized'. The hitherto undisturbed land of the Igbo people soon finds itself engulfed in a sea of changes following the entry of the colonisers. Similarly, in *A Naga Village Remembered*, the entry of the British soon changed the traditional set-up of the Nagas, determining a course that would lead them to a vastly different direction. Because the natives were regarded as the 'other' that needed to be taught the language of civilization, strides were made for the re-ordering of the Naga way of life.

Before Christianity, the Nagas believed in the existence of a supernatural power(s), for which regular sacrifices had to be performed as a sign of tribute or appeasement. The religion of the Nagas has often been called animistic in nature. The word 'animism' was first coined by the anthropologist E.B. Tylor (1832–1917) in his book, *Primitive Cultures*. The *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature* describes animism as not a "type of religion" but "a theory of religion" (78). The *New World Encyclopedia* defines animism as the "belief in numerous personalized, supernatural beings endowed with reason, intelligence and/or volition, that inhabit both objects and living beings and govern their existences. More simply, it is the belief that 'everything is conscious' or that 'everything has a soul'" (para. 1). The religion of the Nagas has been subject to debate with some scholars claiming that, given their belief in a Supreme being, one cannot claim the Nagas as purely animist (Longvah 138). The belief in spirits inhabiting both animate and inanimate objects is however evidenced among the various Naga tribes and as such, this term has been used in the thesis to denote this practice of worshipping and revering the non-human world.

Animism has long been the practice of the Nagas and while it is agreed to be an integral part of the early Naga way of living, it often comes attached with negative connotations as a result of the colonizing effects. It is relegated towards the old worldview of living, a time of 'darkness', before the 'light' brought about by the colonisers and the missionaries. The Naga way of living, like most of the colonised, was considered barbaric and primitive by the Europeans and they took it upon themselves to convert and 'civilize' the Nagas. In *A Naga Village Remembered*, the pastoral life is broken down in the aftermath of the war, with the British seeking to subjugate the warriors of Khonoma. The result was a "treaty on the 27th of March 1880, between the representatives of the British Government and the elders of Khonoma" (Iralu xiv). The entry of the British into Khonoma paved way for the missionaries to bring Christianity into the land. It should, however, be noted that the battle of Khonoma was not the entry point for the missionaries into the Naga region. The impact of Christianity was already being felt in different parts of the Naga Hills as a result of the contact with missionaries and thus, with the suppression of the Khonoma village, the same process of conversion and assimilation soon began. The process began with the setting up of educational institutions and medical facilities.

For the process of proselytization to take place, the Nagas had to be taught to read and write. Educational institutions, therefore, had to be set up. With the establishment of a new western form of educational system, the newly converts were forced to abandon the Naga educational institutions like the morungs, causing irrevocable damage to the cultural and traditional values of the Nagas. The missionaries regarded animism as pagan and sought to change what they thought was a heathen practice (Eaton 13). While certain practices like head-hunting was given

up, the rigid measures set forth by the missionaries greatly affected and changed the ancient traditional practices of the Nagas. According to R.S. Sugirtharajah:

> the growth of protestant churches in the colonies had a familiar pattern. First, the denunciation of the natives' idolatrous practices, then preaching accompanied by the presentation and dissemination of the Bible as the answer to their miserable state, followed by the establishment of denominational churches, and the founding of educational and medical institutions. (52)

In *A Naga Village Remembered*, educational institutions are established following the arrival of the British. Seeing that the natives had to rely on bone-setters, herbalists and chicken sacrificers, Dr. Sidney Rivenburg astutely goes back to America to study medicine for two years at Baltimore's Medical College. Equipped with knowledge of modern medicine, Dr. Rivenburg soon settles in among the natives who become less wary of the foreigner, bent on healing the sick. By building rapport with the natives, Rivenburg made inroads into the process of conversion. As explained in the novel, "There seemed to be greater acceptability of the white man now that he could cure ailments with his medicines. Between treating the patients, Rivenburg continued to tell them of Christ's gospel, making more inroads" (Iralu 94).

A similar progress can be seen in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. The coming of missionaries soon establishes educational institutions and churches in Umofia. One such missionary is Mr. Brown who seems to be able to find a balance between the natives and the newly converts, unlike his rather orthodox successor Reverend James Smith. Both Dr. Rivenburg in *A Naga Village Remembered* and Achebe's Mr. Brown uses the Christian notion of a Supreme deity who is above all other deities and seeks no sacrifice from the people for appeasement. Like Nyowe who seeks reason behind

the abandoning of twins in the Evil forest or of the killing of Ikemefuna, Vipiano too questions why her sister, who had always adhered strictly to the village laws and customs, should be the recipient of a 'lashu' death. Questions such as these find their answers in the new religion and Achebe's Nwoye is among the first to convert. While Mr. Brown is a fictional character, Kire's Dr. Rivenburg was among the first to translate the scripture into Angami. Using historical evidence to corroborate her story, Kire attempts to build a narrative that finds its likeness among the many narratives of the colonised. The methods of Dr. Rivenburg and Mr. Brown reveal the important role of the missionaries in changing the natives' thoughts and precepts.

Change in the educational system was one of the major factors that brought about a swift assimilation of the Naga tribes into the coloniser's culture. The traditional education system gave away to a more 'modern' and 'western' oriented system. Exercised primarily for a fuller immersion of the natives into the Christian religion, the use of the Roman script gradually allowed the newly converts to grasp the language of the colonisers. This process of slowly administering the colonial ways to the natives is seen in the following lines from *A Naga Village Remembered*, "Rivenburg's school was unconventional: he wrote primers in Angami using roman script. So, Sato's first book was in Angami. Later, he progressed to the higher class where a very popular class was the "Talking class." In this class, Chaha encouraged his pupils to converse in English" (95). The transition from oral to a written culture was seen as a necessary step not only for the purposes of dissemination of the Biblical word, but also as an integral step towards 'civilization'. The Naga world is shaped by oral narratives which are integral for the workings of the village system. Not only does it perform the usual functions of entertainment and instruction, it has also come to be seen as foundational to the neotic processes—the means of acquiring,

accumulating, storing and retrieving knowledge – of these societies (Garuba 409). Oral narratives serve as a reservoir of history and the younger generations are naturally expected to learn and impart the same values to the generation after them. With no written literature of their own, the history of people is stored in the memories of the people. The collective memory of the community strengthens and gives shape to the stories of the people. The oral cultures of the natives were, however, thought to be primitive and in need of change. In *The Bible and the Third World: Precolonial, Colonial and Postcolonial Encounters*, R.S. Sugirtharajah states that "The assumption of the missionaries was that oral cultures were empty and were waiting to be filled with written texts" (69). He explains how the early missionaries used the colonialist binary paradigm of Christian/ savage, civilized/barbaric, orderly/disorderly to define and explain their dominance over the colonised (62). Inculcating European manners with the aid of the Bible was one of the first measures employed for the 'advancement' of the natives. In accepting the new religion brought by the missionaries, the converts had to adhere to new rules laid down by the missionaries. This meant giving up participation in the village festivities as well as consumption of rice beer which was an essential feature of the Naga culture. "The second mark of colonial interpretation," according to Sugirtharajah, "was the introduction of the 'other' alien values under the guise of biblicization" (64). This is evidenced not only in the physical manifestation of the Nagas use of western clothes, but is also seen in the way this 'alien' culture shaped their thinking. J.P. Mills observed these changes and critiques this transformation of the natives in *The Ao Nagas*:

> A Naga who puts on foreign clothes adopts with them a foreign outlook. His old environment is no longer good enough for him, and

> what appears particularly abhorrent to him is the prospect of a life-long routine of going down a steep hill every morning, doing a day's work in the fields, and coming up a steep hill every evening. The more "civilized" he is the less he likes work which entails manual labour. (422)

Thus, the missionaries, by imposing their "own milieu into a totally different environment they lost sight of the importance of rooting faith in a manner that does not dissociate Nagas from all that is inherently Naga" (Hümtsoe-Nienu 68-69). The religious practices were discarded for the new religion and in doing so, created a break in the relationship between man and nature. The harmony in the village is disrupted by this us/them dichotomy and extends towards the relationship of man with nature as well.

For the Nagas steeped in animistic beliefs, there is no demarcation between the natural and the supernatural. Man is not outside of nature, neither is nature outside of man. This is fortified in the folklore of the Nagas which describes the familial relationship between man, tiger and spirit (Kire, "Man, Spirit and Tiger" 11-14). In the pre-colonial world of *A Naga Village Remembered*, the belief in the interconnection between the spirit world and the natural world is accepted as a natural course of life. The belief that man, tiger and spirit were brothers, is a part of the Naga folklore and works to create a bridge in understanding man's communion with the natural world. Folktales and folklores are seamlessly woven into the everyday workings of the village life, that, interpretation of a particular phenomenon is usually traced to a particular story or incident that might have happened in the past. Thus when Vilau kills a tiger, he has to perform a series of elaborate rituals in order to appease the other tigers that might seek revenge. While he had never performed

the rituals before, his knowledge of the village customs allows him to perform the necessary rites without any difficulty. An example can be cited from the text, "His paternal uncle ran to him with some grains of soyabean in his hand. He was stern as he rebuked his nephew: 'They say you have killed our elder brother who was kind and gentle. Do not come.' Vilau stopped and sombrely replied, 'Uncle, it was not I, it was the spear that struck him down'" (Iralu 12).

From the moment Vilau enters the village gate, the rituals concerning the tiger killing unfolds almost as in a play. While killing a tiger is seen as an important achievement, due respect is given to the animal considered to be the brother of man. The space occupied by the pre-Christian Naga includes both the spirit and the animal world. Man is not an outsider, neither are the spirits nor the animals, and this connection is reinforced by the stories handed down through centuries of oral narration. As seen in the pre-Christian world of *A Naga Village Remembered*, there is an understanding of oneness between the natural and the supernatural. Nature is not silent. It communicates with the human world, just as the human world learns the language of nature. This is clearly evidenced in the sixth chapter of Kire's novel *When the River Sleeps*, titled "Speaking to the Tiger" (25). The inter-connection between man, animal and spirit gather confirmation in the figure of the weretiger. This transformation of man and his spirit into an animal is a widely accepted belief among the Nagas. The weretiger embodies man, spirit and animal, all at once. It is here that we find the unity between human, animal and the spirit world. In *The Ao-Naga Oral Tradition*, Temsula Ao states that, "the nature of the prevalent belief appears to have evolved out of such a past where it was believed that man could live with animals as equals so as to speak the same language, co-exist in one environment and even intermarry (77). When Vilie encounters the weretiger for the second time,

he calls out the names of his clansmen, who were believed to have the spirit of the tiger, “Kuovi! Menuolhoulie! Wetsho! Is this the way to treat your clansman? I am Vilie, son of Kedo, your clansman. I am not here to do you harm. Why are you treating me as a stranger? I come in peace. You owe me your hospitality. I am your guest!” (Kire *When the River* 26). Hearing these words, the weretiger leaves Vilie alone and disturbs him no more. The animal identifies itself with one of the names called out by Vilie and recognising Vilie as a member of his clan, goes away. The incident revives Vilie’s memories of the stories he’d heard of men transforming into animals while growing up. These stories were often told in the morungs, which housed different age-groups of young men and women who attained puberty. It is here that they are taught the various ways of the village life and imparted knowledge on how to go about in the world. Vile remembers an elder explaining the importance of such houses, “This is what the age-groups are for, to impart knowledge of the natural and the supernatural to you so that you go out into the world with knowledge of both, and not disrespectful of either world as some people are” (28). It is the knowledge imparted in the village educational institution that saves Vilie from harm. Not only is he taught the stories concerning the supernatural phenomena of the were-animals, he is also infused with the knowledge to respect both the natural and the supernatural world.

Animism is a sophisticated and long-lived phenomenology of nature (Manes 17). The animistic world is seen as “inspirited—including humans, cultural artifacts, and natural entities, both biological and ‘inert’” (18). Thus, interactions between the human and the nonhuman world are not regarded as an unusual occurrence. In *A Naga Village Remembered*, this is seen in the matter of fact response to ‘spiriting’, or the act of whisking away unwary individuals into the spirit world and is also seen in

the blessings pronounced on the crops by the elders during the ritual of seed-sowing, "My paddy may you grow up well, though the weeds are abundant, my paddy do you grow around the tree stumps and boulder. It will be the food of generations, the food of wartime, grow bent over with full husked grain" (Iralu 66). The pronouncement reveals the simple acceptance of the ability of non-human entities to comprehend the human words directed to them. Human speech does not, then, become a unique faculty, but is seen "as a subset of the speaking world" (Manes 18).

Unlike the dualistic thinking of the western worldview, there is no clear cut demarcation between the human world and the spirit world. They are both inclusive of the animistic tradition of the pre-colonial Nagas. Furthermore, Levi's remembrance of his father's encounter with Chükhieo, the guardian of wildlife, seeks to affirm Manes' statement, "that not only is the nonhuman world alive, but it is filled with articulate subjects, able to communicate with humans" (18). This is also seen in Kire's novel *Mari.* The incessant buzzing of the bee around Mari is taken as a sign that something has happened. The novel revolves around the protagonist Mari and her experience in the Battle of Kohima in 1944. By this time, the relationship between the Nagas and the British have mellowed down in comparison with the earlier novel *A Naga Village Remembered* which illustrates the early years of the Naga-British contact. The missionaries have succeeded in converting the majority of the tribes into Christianity, and yet, there are still remains of the old sayings and beliefs. One such incident revolves around Mari and the bee. Mari writes:

> It buzzed around me for so long that everyone was alarmed. Our people always noticed unusual signs in the natural world.
>
> I suddenly felt alarmed and frightened. Was this bee trying to tell me something? Bringing me a message, perhaps? Our people say that if a

> bee does not leave off bothering a person for a long time, it is because it has a message for the person. (78)

It is soon revealed that Vic is killed in the battle on the same day that the bee hovered around Mari. While it may simply be brushed off as a coincidence, Kire explains how the natural world is and has always been a part of the Naga consciousness, that interpretation of events is often collected from the 'messages' given by nature.

Not only animals, even inanimate objects like rocks, trees and rivers are believed to have life. This is the very foundation of the emergence story of the Ao Nagas who are believed to have emerged out of the earth at Lungterok which, literally translated, means six stones. The title of Kire's novel *When the River Sleeps*, is suggestive of the role of nature as an animate being in tandem with the human world. Vilie's dream in the first chapter introduces us to a natural world that is alive and aware. The river is seen as a living entity that not only sleeps, but when awake becomes protective of the heart stone that lies underneath it. Not only is the river seen in a state of slumber, but Vilie's constant reiteration that the forest is his wife seems to further the claims of man-nature relationship in connection to male-female dichotomy, with nature taking on the role of a woman. He isolates himself from constant human contact, only to direct it towards the forest. He finds, in the forest, a wife-mother figure. Kire reaffirms this by stating that, "the forest as wife is also nearly synonymous with the forest as mother because she provides him shelter and food" (Kire email). This notion of nature as a nurturing figure is repeated in Kire's *Son of the Thundercloud*. The river with is life-giving properties is called 'our mother'. As quoted from the text, "No one came back from the river empty-handed. There was food in the river, and so the villagers called it 'our mother'" (54). With the appearance of rain, the river once again flourishes and the earth comes alive, hungrily swallowing the seeds. When rain

falls on the Village of the Weavers, nature responds rapidly by giving 'birth' to trees and rocks. The image of the forest as a mother is aptly applied in the symbolic rebirth of all things animate and inanimate. The village headman's wonder at the sudden appearance of rocks and trees is answered by Mesanuo. She replies, "It is called birthing, headman. The earth has birthed trees, rocks, stones, and grain, just as a mother births her offspring. The trees and the rocks are the sons of the earth. Take care of them and they will take care of you and your children" (46). Through Mesanuo, Kire presses forth on the importance of realising the balance needed between man and nature. The effect of human actions towards nature is seen as a boomerang effect. As Pele looks at the newborn babe, he recalls his mother singing him a lullaby:

> The river runs
> And it runs
> Into the sea
> And the sea runs
> Into the rain
> Where it all comes from. (47)

The song dwells as an instructive medium that explains the origin of rain. Songs and stories act as instruments of instruction for the pre-Christian Nagas, and the simple lullaby sets an example of how songs and stories, passed through generations—in this case, from Pele's mother to him and then to Rhalie—act as reservoirs of knowledge for the younger generation.

J. Donald Hughes states that the modern ecological crisis is a result of attitudes which views nature as, "something to be freely conquered, used, and dominated without calculation of the resultant cost to mankind and the earth" (158).

Christianity saw nature as something to be dominated, and in instilling this notion of nature domination, the Nagas' foray into progress and modernisation began. Nature found its place not side by side with the human world, but was instead seen in relation of its usefulness to man. By distinguishing nature as existing for the benefit of man, a hierarchical structure is put into place where man is above the natural world. This system can be traced back to the Greek Neoplatonist through the Middle Ages which propounded a strict hierarchical system with God at the highest level, followed by angels or spirits, heavenly bodies, down to man, with animals, plants and minerals occupying the lowest rung. Hughe, however, elaborates that, "the process of dominating the earth is seen not as a religious crusade following a biblical commandment but a profitable venture seeking economic benefit" (ibid.).

It has been argued that while modernity fast-forwarded the inevitable destruction of the earth, the different indigenous peoples of the world were also heading towards the same direction. In this regard, the agricultural practices of the Nagas, in particular the slash and burn or jhum cultivation has often been criticised for its destruction towards the environment. It has been argued that such practices inevitably lead to the destruction of the environment. However, various circumstances factor in the employment of such agricultural methods. In Temsula Ao's short story "A New Chapter" in *These Hills called Home: Stories from a War Zone*, the people are aware of the destruction wrought about by such agricultural practices, however, the changing times leave them no choice but to cultivate the land instead of allowing the earth to remain fallow and replenish itself for several years. The indigenous knowledge of the natives concerning land reflects on the empathetic nature of the natives towards the non-human world. To quote from the text:

> They knew that the job would not be as difficult as in the old days because the scorched earth had not yet had enough time to replenish herself; the vegetation was young and consisted only of tender saplings, which could be cleared without much effort. In the old days, such areas would have been allowed to lie fallow for at least nine or ten years before the cycle was resumed. But the core of the earth had changed forever in the last decade and they had no choice but to turn to her ravaged body, to hurt her some more and extract whatever she could yield to them from her depleted resources. (121)

In *Bitter Wormwood*, Kire describes the traditional practice of terrace cultivation among the Angami Nagas, "In this area, everyone cultivated terrace fields. It was more laborious than jhum fields, the slash-and-burn method. Nevertheless, people preferred terrace fields which did not damage the soil as jhumming did" (33). The understanding of land and its uses, and the reciprocity of the natives in caring for the land is underlined by Kire. That being so, despite the damaging of the soil by jhum cultivation, Ao's take on this practice highlights on how the land is left to replenish before it is cultivated again. The land is allowed to heal before it is reused again. Such profound understanding of land can only corroborate the notion of the Naga's close relationship with nature. Only because of the various 'upheavals' in the village are the villagers forced to re-cultivate.

The various circumstances leading to the political upheavals in the land forced the Nagas to undergo drastic changes in a short span of time. As mentioned earlier, the arrival of the missionaries broke the communal life of the Nagas. This ultimately created a break within the villages, once held strongly under the age-old traditional laws and diktats. The result of this fracture can be observed in the

characters of Roko and Sato in *A Naga Village Remembered*. No longer trained for warfare, younger generations like Roko and Sato choose different lives. Roko, while mocking the new way of life, does not really fit into the old life either. The morungs that once housed and saw to the education of the younger generation slowly disintegrates with the interest in the new life offered by the missionaries and the British administration. With the diminishing interest in the traditional educational system, the compact structure of the village crumbles as more people venture towards 'promising' prospects outside of the village system. While Sato is firm in his decision to follow the new religion, Roko remains situated to a way of life that is slowly extinguishing. With no more raids to conduct, and with the degeneration of the village structure, it becomes difficult for the remaining people to find their place within the village. When once, everything was systematic, with different age groups assigned different tasks that would enable for the smooth functioning of the village, the breaking down of this social order creates a sense of loss for the people. In such a situation, Roko increasingly turns to drinking, becoming an embarrassment to his family, especially his father, a respected village elder.

Different religious views alienate Sato from the family, but Roko is also alienated in the sense that there is meaninglessness (another term used by Seeman to explain alienation) in his life. It is devoid of meaning because there is no sense of an ending. Roko chooses to fill this void by drinking and picking fights with his brother. Sato, on the other hand, tries to find a parallel between the two religions as he tries to argue his reason for choosing the new religion, "The creator deity we worship and sanctify ourselves unto at Sekrenyi, the one we call Ukepenuopfü has another name in the new religion. He is the father of *Isu*. *Isu* is his son and he is our chicken sacrifice—he sacrificed himself from all our ailments and misfortunes so we don't

have to make chicken sacrifices again" (Iralu101). Ukepenuopfu, according to Richard M. Eaton was the "supreme goddess" of the Angami tribe and in the early days of the conversion process, was used in order to incorporate the deity into the Christian cosmology for a smoother path towards proselytization. He explains that "the association of feminine deities with agricultural fertility normally reflects relatively stabilised religious as well as ecological systems" (40). The transition from a female deity into a male deity took place when J.E. Tanquist used "Ukepenoupfu" to refer to the Christian god in his translation of the Book of Revelation in 1918 (ibid.). However, the inevitable movement towards Christianity saw not only a break in the relationship between man and the "supreme goddess" but also between families and clans.

The new converts were ostracized from the community and forced to settle away from their village. Within Levi's household, Sato is disowned by his father for refusing to follow the old religion. With rifts widening between Sato and his brother Roko, his father's disownment creates the final break in the once nuclear family which in turn is central for the smooth functioning of the village system. Through Levi's family, Kire describes the slow but definite disintegration not only of the family, but also of the village as a whole. Sides are formed as more and more people are pulled towards the changing scenario.

Levi's feeling of inadequacy in bringing up children so different from the old life changes him and this change extends towards his wife as well. As Kire mentions, "He had not been able to bring himself to tell his wife how sorely disappointed he was with his two sons. And she, wary of his immense rage, dared not broach the subject till he was ready to tell her" (Iralu 107). The feeling of powerlessness in the face of destiny widens the gap between Levi and his wife, Peno. His inability to

express his helplessness isolates him from her much as his sons drift away from him. Melvin Seeman's notion of powerlessness as a facet of alienation can be evidenced in the internal struggle of Levi. Because of the contact with the colonisers, his village undergoes a great change and in the process, his family is broken apart. Levi alone cannot stem the changes that were slowly taking over the village and this feeling of helplessness estranges him from his wife.

In her book, *On Being a Naga: Essays*, Temsula Ao describes the impact of Christianity and education among the Nagas:

> Slowly but surely a new breed of Nagas was emerging, who rejected the old ways and who sought a new identification apart from the tradition and culture of the fore-fathers. At this stage of our history, being a Naga became an apologetic acknowledgement of a seemingly inferior individual. (4)

This fear of burying the past is expressed in Kire's *Son of the Thundercloud*:

> 'Our young should not think that there are lands better than this to build a home. They belong here, they must take the place of their ancestors.' They feared that if the young were not taught to love the village, it would soon be abandoned. They had seen it happen around them. (12)

The rejection of one's custom and tradition brings about famine in the land, famine in both the literal and metaphorical sense. While the drought kills and destroys villages, it is the more dangerous 'famine' of stories and songs that ultimately ends them. The destruction of land goes side by side with the death of the story-tellers. In *Son of the Thundercloud,* Mesanuo tells Pele that the 'dark ones' killed the story-tellers because they "did not want them to transform people's minds with their stories" (63).

Without the story-tellers to narrate the stories of the past, man loses hope and with hopelessness comes darkness.

Vilie separates himself from the village and chooses to live in the forest alone. He deliberately chooses to alienate himself from the social milieu of the village and lives in the forest. While the reason for this self-estrangement is unclear, the events that unfold seem to suggest that the death of his love Mechüseno was the reason for his departure. While it may have been so in the beginning, Vilie forms a strong bond with the forest and this relationship ultimately holds him back from returning to the village. His self-isolation is acutely felt in the first few years of living in the forest and he tries to understand the reason for this loneliness. Abdul Saleem in his essay "Theme of Alienation in Modern Literature" explains that "the meaning of the feeling of loneliness is sociological in nature; it is called social-isolation. In social reference, the meaning of Social Alienation is the decay of creative and meaningful relations between man and man, and man and his environment, between man or the prevailing reality" (72). Vilie tries to brush aside this feeling of loneliness by calling the forest his wife. The relationship which he denies himself from his fellow villagers finds root in his relationship with the forest, and by this extension, with nature. The forest thus plays the dual role of wife and mother. He attributes the feeling of loneliness to the feeling of marriage, "with periods when a chasm of loneliness separates the partners leaving each one alone with their own thoughts, groping for answers" (Kire *When the River* 9). In accepting the inherent loneliness of man, Vilie finds solace within himself. As quoted in the text, "He felt clearer in his head. He had strived so hard after something that was still elusive. Perhaps the answer lay not in striving but in being. In simply accepting that loneliness would never be eliminated fully, but that one could deal with it by learning to treat it like a companion and no

longer an adversary"(10). Vilie understands his existential predicament is not brought about by his lack of relationship with other people. He believes that loneliness is a part of being human and this acceptance becomes the first step towards self-realisation. The quest to find the heart stone becomes a spiritual journey for Vilie. It ultimately becomes a quest to find himself. In the process of acquiring the heart stone, Vilie goes through a series of trials, and by adhering to the spiritual lessons set by the seer and Kani, he is able to overcome them. The heart stone, sought by people for its magical wish-granting properties, is not easy to find, and even when found, the river puts up a fight to prevent the stone from being taken. "The river fights back when Vilie tries to take the stone because the river is a spirit and it fights anyone trying to take its spiritual knowledge away" (Kire email). Thus, when Vilie tries to take the heart stone out of the water, the river immediately retaliates by trying to drown him.

In "Some Principles of Ecocriticism," William Howarth explains that unlike hunters or writers, nature makes direct statements, without implication or analysis (71). The river is seen as a spiritual entity here, unwilling to let go of the heart stone. In desperation, Vilie calls upon Kepenuopfü: "Sky is my father, Earth is my mother, stand aside death! Kepenuopfü fights for me, today is my day! I claim the wealth of the river because mine is the greater spirit. To him who has the greater spirit belongs the stone!" (Kire *When the River* 103). The reference to earth as mother and sky as father can be found in the Native American belief system as well. In "A First American's View", Momaday writes, "'The earth is our mother. The sky our father.' This concept of nature, which is at the centre of Native American world view, is familiar to us all." (253). The idea of nature as sacred is an integral part of both the Naga and the Native American belief system. By acknowledging nature as a giver of

life, Vilie seeks to validate his oneness with nature and it only then is he released by the river.

In "Decolonizing Relationships with Nature", Val Plumwood says that the ideology of colonisation

> involves a form of *anthropocentrism* that underlies and justifies the colonization of non-human nature through the imposition of the colonizers' land forms and visions of ideal landscapes in just the same way that *Eurocentrism* underlies and justifies modern forms of European colonization, which sees indigenous culture as primitive, less rational and closer to children, animals and nature. (53)

Kire's later works increasingly focus on the human relationships in the wake of the ongoing clashes between the Indian government and the Naga insurgency. Her novels are almost chronologic, in the sense that one can read them as a period in the journey of the Naga people, beginning with the pre-colonial era in *A Naga Village Remembered* to the Indo-Japanese war in *Mari*, to the fight for Naga independence in *Bitter Wormwood* and *Life on Hold*. Peno's dream in *A Naga Village Remembered*, hints at what is to come. The death of Levi dreamt by Peno is a symbolic attempt to signify the fall of the village that was once home to a band of proud warriors rooted in tradition. In her dream, Peno sees "a great tree of the forest fall to the ground" filling the entire forest with the sound of the crash (*Iralu* 110). One of the last of his generation, untouched by the intrusion of new ideologies and new ways of living, Levi's death is mirrored in the fall of the tree. Man's close connection with nature breaks down with his changing perspective towards a life regarded as inferior. The ramification of the fall of the tree is felt in Kire's later works where the different

protagonists attempt to make meaning in an increasingly meaningless world. In "The Scared Hoop: A Contemporary Perspective", Paula Gunn Allen states that

> In English, one can divide the universe into two parts: the natural and the supernatural. Humanity has no real part in either, being neither animal nor spirit—that is, the supernatural is discussed as though it were apart from people, and the natural as though people were apart from it. This necessarily forces English-speaking people into a position of alienation from the world they live in. (247)

Because of the close connection of Nagas with the natural world, the removal of from the rural setting and into the urban world ultimately creates a feeling of alienation. Kire proposes a re-visitation to the past in order to reinitiate oneself with the natural world. The colonial notion of the 'savage' and the 'civilized' is challenged and subverted through these lines in *Son of the Thundercloud:*

> Because the people sought to be free whenever they heard stories. Free of fear, free of shame and constant desire. Without the stories, people believed they were destined to suffer, and they allowed the dark ones to enslave their minds and fill them with fear and sorrow until they died. (Kire 63)

However, this does not necessarily mean a return to the pre-Christian past. As in Momaday, biblical elements are found in *Son of the Thundercloud.* Embedded within the narrative, we find the biblical narrative of prophecy and of a saviour. "A virgin shall conceive and give birth to a son, and he will save his people. Signs and wonders shall accompany his birth, and the land shall be rejuvenated" (41). The biblical prophecy of a saviour is incorporated in the context of the Naga world, revealing the result of a deeply cross-cultural setting. While attempting to address issues

concerning the political and the social, Kire imbues within her narrative, the lived realities of the Nagas and at the same time attempts to document and preserve the oral tradition and belief system of the Nagas that are slowly being pushed to the periphery. It is not possible to return to a pre-christian, pre-colonial state, nor is it feasible to move forward without an understanding one one's culture, where identities are rooted. A synthesis of the two worlds is perhaps the answer to the existing struggle. Kire's writing reveals the tension between the two worlds and while the struggle may continue, through her writings, Kire presents a reconciliation of these worlds that have shaped the Nagas today.

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CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

This thesis aimed to study the notion of alienation and eco-ethics in the context of Native American and Naga writers, specifically that of N. Scott Momaday, Leslie Marmon Silko, Temsula Ao and Easterine Kire. The first chapter attempted to highlight the important theories of phenomenology, alienation and ecocriticism. It also endeavoured to present an overview of the history and literature of the Native Americans and the Nagas. In doing so, it has been observed that the shared colonial experiences drastically shaped the discourse of the Native American and Naga narratives. The chapter also describes the impact of western education that changed the landscape of these cultures that are intricately linked with oral tradition. Both, Native Americans and the Nagas, share similarities in their struggle to preserve the past and move towards finding their place in the modern world.

The second chapter focusses on the ecocritical readings of the novels of N. Scott Momaday. It is also an attempt to study the effects of alienation on the protagonists in *House Made of Dawn* and *Ancient Child*. Landscape plays an important role, not only for the protagonist, but for Momaday as well. The return to the land ultimately serves as the beginning towards healing from alienating forces. Man's place within the world of the Native American oral narratives, as well as with that of the natural world is explored. The characters that seem to be alienated find themselves only by returning to the land and finding an affirmation of their part within the landscape. The idea of alienation in Momaday's work is seen closely connected to the notion of the absence of relation with the land. It is only through the

return to the land that the protagonists are finally able to find and understand their place in a world they had hitherto found to be alien and fragmented.

The third chapter examines presence of alienation and eco-consciousness in the novels of Leslie Marmon Silko. Assimilation into the colonisers' culture is seen as one of the factors contributing towards the alienation of the protagonists. In *Ceremony*, Silko calls for the invention of new ceremonies in order to heal the alienated and the dispossessed. This is also one of the reasons why we find the text interspersed with the Laguna Pueblo myths and folklores. By going back to the stories, Tayo finds his connection with nature and enters a state of self-realization. The deep ecological notion of "biological equalitarianism" is seen reflected in Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*, which mirrors her almost militant-like stand towards the conservation of earth. Silko's writings stress on the need for an ideological change that will eventually allow a greater appreciation for life and the various life forms.

Chapter IV explores theme of alienation in the writings of Temsula Ao. The changes brought about by political and economic imbalance breeds a new group of people seeking to find validation as they try to emulate the coloniser. This chapter also looks into the domination of nature in the name of progress. The 'othering' of the non-human world is highlighted in the mindless destruction of the environment. Ao's poems lament the loss of the past, and calls for the preservation of one's culture in the face of rapid modernisation. Her poems reveal the inextricable relation between man and nature and the need to effectively reconnect the deteriorating cultural ethos that is strongly sympathetic towards the natural world.

The fifth chapter is a study of Easterine Kire's novels in the context of alienation and eco-ethics. This chapter describes the engagement of the pre-Christian Nagas with the non-human world. The supernatural is accepted as a part of the

everyday lived realities of the Nagas. Much like Momaday and Silko's attempt to bring about an understanding between the past and the present, Easterine Kire's story-telling, attempts to bring about a synthesis between the old and the new.

In the introductory chapter, it has been mentioned that "phenomenology is the study of human experience and of the ways things present themselves to us in and through such experience" (2). The writers discussed in this thesis develop their art through various acts of consciousness. Unlike Husserl's transcendental phenomenology which 'brackets' the external world for phenomenological purposes, the works of Native American and Naga writers cannot be read by excluding their history. History plays an important role in the writings of both Native American and Naga writers. The application of oral narratives within modern literary genres allows a diversion from the western linear format by making room for re-creating a narrative that seeks to find its place within a largely homogeneous structure. Heidegger's pre-occupation with 'being' serves as the basis through which the notion of alienation is analysed. Only a 'being' situated within the world can raise the question of its 'being-ness'. Momaday and Silko's characters are alienated beings, trying to find coherence in a world that is increasingly becoming foreign, in the sense that, things are no longer as it was. Their search for meaning and coherence sets them out towards a journey in search of self. By locating them outside their ancestral land, the writers create a place for the protagonists' return to their roots. To return, however, means not a return to the idyllic untarnished state before the feeling of alienation. It requires an appropriation of their culture which they were once in relation to. Returning, here, requires the convergence of the present and the past. Returning to the place steeped in one's culture and tradition is a recurring motif in Momaday and Silko. This return is also a return to nature. Both Native American and Naga writers are ecologically

conscious and they project this consciousness in their writings. In trying to understand the works of authors that have been shaped by the colonial experience, it has been found that, while differently located, their experiences transcend the physical spaces they occupy. Their experiences have shaped their writing and bring a greater understanding of the forces that have shaped and transformed societies with similar experiences. One such example can be heard in the echo of Vilie in Kire's *When the River Sleeps*, "Sky is my father, Earth is my mother, stand aside death! Kepenuopfü fights for me, today is my day!" (103). Momaday speaks of a similar Native American worldview in his essay, "A First American's View" when he writes, "'The earth is our mother. The sky our father.' This concept of nature, which is at the centre of Native American world view, is familiar to us all." (253) Silko too, mentions this chant in her short story, "Lullaby", "The earth is your mother/ she holds you/ The sky is your father,/he protects you" (*Storyteller* 48). The chant reveals not only the central space occupied by nature in Native American and Naga world; it also connects these two worlds by transcending physical boundaries and converging in a shared consciousness.

Their writings echo the frustrations of the generations caught between the old traditions and the new. For the most part, their protagonists undergo the feeling of alienation because of their inability to fully embrace their cultural heritage that has been passed by their ancestors. While the change of economy from an egalitarian one to a more capitalist oriented system is seen as one of the causes for the feeling of alienation among the protagonists, we have observed that there is an inherent desire in the need to find one's self. Only by accepting and acknowledging the past, are the protagonists allowed to come to terms with their lives.

Alienation is closely tied to nature and for the most part, the protagonists find healing in their native land. The notion of land as a healer in Momaday is taken forward by Silko, where she calls for a synthesis between the old and new, to create new ceremonies to cope with the changing times. They are alienated beings cut off from their roots, and by extension, from nature. They are fragmented beings, trying to find themselves. On the other hand, Easterine Kire's character of Vilie, in *When the River Sleeps*, is well attuned to nature. However, his journey to find the sleeping stone is essential towards bringing a total understanding of his place in the natural world. Vilie, although detached from the village life, finds his bearings by placing himself at one with nature.

The protagonists of Momaday and Silko find themselves searching for their centre. They move away from their land and experience a life that is different from their everyday communal world. The characters in Temsula Ao's stories break away from their land and find their place within a society that caters to the need of the individual. The notion of togetherness that is central to a village life is forgotten. There is a tone of pessimism which suggests the futility of the characters' return to their traditional values. Momaday and Silko, however, are more optimistic in that they believe in the possibility of achieving a harmony between the past and the present. The disconnection from the communal life into a more individually oriented one occurs in the desire of the protagonists to be like the colonisers. The movement away from the land is necessary in order for the protagonists to fully understand and appreciate the importance of one's cultural identity. Abel, Tayo and Set are all subconsciously searching for a centre. They are representative of the new generation of displaced Native Americans who are caught between the old ways and the new. The feeling of helplessness, of powerlessness and meaninglessness is present in the

characters of Momaday and Silko. In order to find their self, both Momaday and Silko suggests for a return to one's culture. This is achieved by breaking away from the idea of the centrality of man and his notion of himself as an enlightened being, in control of the world and its inhabitants. The return to the land is a return to the community which is the vehicle for the transfer of ancestral knowledge. In an oral transmission based system, the community thus becomes the sole carrier of culture and tradition. Integrating the characters back to the land is the integration into their roots. By understanding their role as carriers of their culture, the notion of individual is stripped away. Thus, it is only by a conscious decentring that the protagonists find their centre. In this sense, their journey towards healing is the first step towards understanding themselves. Perhaps, their journey beyond can be seen in the figure of Vilie who is in search for a deeper connection between man and nature and ultimately gains the secret of this integral relationship.

In exploring the works of Native American and Naga writers, one observes the shared experiences that connect writers in their need to document their history in an increasingly text based medium. The importance of nature is present in both Native American and Naga literatures. While alienation is an important theme in their writings, as observed, the writers provide for a way out by suggesting a synthesis between the past and the present.

A further exploration in the field of eco-criticism is perhaps necessary in trying to understand the relation between man and environment. In a world that is increasingly preoccupied with protecting the environment, a research into the tribal culture and their relation with the natural world, can perhaps create new venues in opening dialogues that may bring about a solution to the way nature is seen and understood. Ecocriticism, Glotfelty explains, "has been predominantly a white

movement" and believes that "it will become a multi-ethnic movement when stronger connections are made between the environment and issues of social-justice, and when a diversity of voices are encouraged to contribute to the discussion" (xxv). In the light of this statement then, perhaps the study of these two very differently located and yet vastly similar experiences can open forth new ventures into not only aiding and understanding these writers, but also help pave way for further research in the future.

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