

**Writing Fever, Writing Trauma:  
Tropical Disease and Tribal Medicine—  
The Columbian Exchange in Leslie Marmon  
Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* and *Gardens in  
the Dunes***

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ABSTRACT

This paper studies Native American encounters with colonial disease and configures this disease categorically as “fever.” Fever is not to be seen as a pure physical symptom only, but is a cultural metaphor of Native trauma as well as a bodily reflection of the drought in Native homelands. Whereas trauma is understood as an inner inflammation of the psyche, fever is the acting out of such a psychological wound. It is a sign of disease, but it is, more importantly, that of resistance to disease. Using two of Leslie Marmon Silko's novels, *Almanac of the Dead* (1991) and *Gardens in the Dunes* (1999), I look into the ways fever becomes a finalized reaction of the Native American body defending itself against a pathogenic attack. I argue for the function of fever as the “working through” as well as the “acting out” of Native American psychological, spiritual, and historical trauma. Appropriating and reinventing fever as a cultural metaphor, Silko not only discloses the bitterness and poignancy of Native American traumatic history but locates tribal resistance and healing in the salutary value of fever to instill health, harmony, and balance in both the tribal body and the land.

KEY WORDS

fever, trauma, tropical disease, tribal medicine, Leslie, Marmon Silko



In the sixty-seventh year after the alien invasion, on January 3, 1590, the epidemic began: cough, chills, and fever from which people died.

— Almanac of the Dead

Europeans descendants on American soil anxiously purchased indigenous cures for their dark nights of the soul. . . . The village of sorcerers had got rich making up and selling various odd sorts of alleged “tribal healing magics” and assorted elixirs, teas, balms, waters, crystals, and capsules. . . .

— Almanac of the Dead

For medical uses: “Anodyne” is Greek for “no pain”; “febrifuge” . . . as “refuge from fever” . . . the English word “febrile” came from the Latin *febris*, for “fever”; “diuretic” was from the Greek for “urine.”

— Gardens in the Dunes

In the eighteenth century when Western medicine underwent a mutation, i.e. “the birth of the clinic” in Michel Foucault’s book title, medical knowledge started to take on a precision that had before belonged only to mathematics. The body became something that could be mapped while diseases were subject to new rules of classification. What had been fundamentally invisible was suddenly offered to the brightness of “the clinical gaze.” For the first time for thousands of years, doctors started to approach their medical objects with “the purity of an unprejudiced gaze” (Foucault 195). “Fever” has ever since

become one of the most prominent categories that made all illnesses visible and expressible and that made diseases fit within a definite network of classification. In the nineteenth century, then, a considerable number of diseases were classified as “fevers.” According to Foucault in his renowned *Naissance de la clinique: une archeologie du regard medical* (1963), the anatomo-pathological analyses carried by nineteenth-century physicians Petit and Serres on enteromesenteric fever, the distinctive definitions of the so-called feverish diseases by Caffin, and Bouillaud’s designation of “essential fevers” gradually rendered “fevers” unproblematic that could be measured in a scientific and objective fashion. By the mid-nineteenth century, Chomel had affirmed that fevers had an organic localization and Andral lastly had devoted a volume of his “Clinique medicale” to the classification of fevers as diseases.<sup>1</sup> Fever as a phenomenon that had fed controversy for the past eras was eventually localized into a somatic symptom that needed to be cured. The classification of diseases as “fevers” has thus regarded “fevers” as defective physical realities, and a judicious mind was constantly drawn towards a search for sick organs. All the fevers have ever since been dissolved into one long organic process that is subject to the clinical investigation.

This paper proposes to examine how “fevers” are configured in two of Leslie Marmon Silko’s recent novels, *Almanac of the Dead* (1991) and *Gardens in the Dunes* (1999), using Foucault’s investigation of “fevers” in Western medical history as its backbone. I argue that as understood to mean a finalized reaction of the organism defending itself against a pathogenic attack, the fever that appears in the course of the disease goes in the opposite direction. *It is a sign not of the disease, but of the resistance to the disease:* “an affection of life striving to break away from death,” as Foucault cites the physician Herman Boehaave (1668–1738) in his archaeology of medical perception suggests (qtd. in Foucault 178). It has, therefore, a salutary value: fever is an excretory movement, purificatory in intention as its etymology shows—*februare* is to expel the shades of the dead ritually from a house (Foucault 179). Therefore, far from pure physiological signs that should be investigated by the Western medical gaze, I argue

fevers contain significant historical and cultural meanings. Fevers are the “working through” as well as the “acting out” of Native American psychological, spiritual, and historical trauma, the externalization of the interior “inflammations.”

“Fever” has a distinct history in the Western medical practice. The Hippocratic physician (of the fifth century B.C., the father of Western medicine) thought that diseases, and most especially fevers, were caused by a disturbance in the four fluids or humours of the body; yellow bile, black bile, blood, and phlegm. The physis sought to restore the normal balance among the body fluids through the action of the innate heat, or natural warmth of the body. The increase of the innate heat during fever thus reflected an intense internal battle between physis and disease. If, instead, the battle with the disease were lost, the patient would die. In treatment, therefore, the Hippocratic physician attempted to support the efforts of the body’s physis to overcome the disease (Wilson 382–83). In ancient Greek medical practice, there was furthermore a connection between warm, wet weather and fever and this relationship was extended into a broad general relationship between the body’s humours and the seasons, and between body and the environments (Wilson 388). Galen (129-ca. 200 A.D.) considered fever as well, saying that excess humours might accumulate in one part of the body where they might cause putrefaction and excessive heat or fever (Wilson 393). Furthermore, Sydenham (1624–1689) drew from his prolonged observation of intermittent fevers the conclusion that disease is “nothing more than an effort of Nature . . . to restore the health of the patient by the elimination of the morbid matter.” Disease arose, he thought, partly from particles of the atmosphere which might enter and become mixed with the humours of the body and with the blood, which would spread the disease throughout the body. Bodily heat was engendered to be a mechanism to dispel the outside harmful particles, according to Leonard G. Wilson (396).

Leonard G. Wilson’s brief survey of how fever had been configured in the Western medical history before the eighteenth century in effect indicates the complicity of fever as disease—it addresses the connection between the body and environments, and

suggests fever function to restore and recover bodily health. It was then not until the eighteenth century when clinical diagnosis based on the knowledge of empiricism through massive speculation started to prevail that doctors have configured and verbalized the unseen into collections of symptoms, which constitute modern medical discourse: “By this simple opposition to the forms of health, the symptom abandons its passivity as a natural phenomenon and becomes a signifier of the disease . . . since the disease is simply a collection of symptoms” (Foucault 92). The symptoms localized in the diseased body and identified in medical profession confirm definite disease patients suffer. The complexity of disease is finally labeled and assimilated into medical discourse—the classification of similar symptoms so as to give any disease an identity (Foucault 101).

In her study of sociology in relation to the paradigm of Western medicine, Sarah Nettleton identifies five basic assumptions of modern Western medicine: the separation of mind-body, i.e., mind-body dualism; the body as a “dysfunctioning machine which needs to be repaired”; the “overplaying of technological intervention”; reductionist explanations of disease as biological factors which disregard “social and psychological factors”; every disease is caused by a specific, identifiable disease entity (3). Disease is localized in the body and oversimplified into symptoms. As the body becomes the site of medical contest—with social metaphors and cultural codes “embodied”—Western medicine fails to address the complexity of disease, understanding disease merely as scientific categories. While medical sociologists such as Sarah Nettleton work to disclose modern medicine as a site where complicated social and cultural agendas intersect and need to be uncovered, such a medical anthropologist as Donald Joralemon in his *Exploring Medical Anthropology* considers ethnography as an important vehicle for understanding disease and Deborah Lupton in her *Medicine as Culture: Illness, Disease and the Body in Western Societies* specifically reflects on how medicine is experienced, perceived and socially constructed in Western societies and thus provides an important way of understanding the socio-cultural dimensions of disease and illness. Whereas modern Western medicine

through clinic diagnosis encodes disease/fever into symptoms, for medical sociologists and anthropologists, pathological symptoms are to be (re-)conceptualized into social and cultural context, which has long been repressed by modern medical empiricism, a stance this paper adopts to address the metaphorical meaning of fever.

Precisely, the actual physical “fevers” that I deal with in my analysis of Leslie Marmon Silko’s two recent novels are the epidemics of “feverish diseases” brought up by European conquest and colonization: flu, small pox, pneumonia, tuberculosis, and the like. When Columbus first discovered the Americas, all these diseases were indeed a most prominent feature of the Columbian exchange, which resulted in the collapse of the Native American Empires as well as the death of millions of Indians.<sup>2</sup> Significantly, the lands invoked images of the tropics for the colonial invaders. Calling this part of the globe “the tropics” was in effect a Western way of defining the landscape that was cultural alien, as well as environmentally distinctive, from Europe of the temperate zone. Unfortunately, as Europeans invented the tropicality of the Americas, they did not turn them into tropical Edens, as they presumed they would.<sup>3</sup> The Americas became the “diseased” lands, the tropical Inferno. Environmental hotness was transformed into bodily heat of Native American sickness.

The hotness is not a mere colonial invention, though, as we consider Silko’s novels. The fever of the body is in effect complicated by and resonant with the poignant drought of the land. As fever becomes an appropriate metaphor for Silko to disclose the bitterness and poignancy of Native American traumatic history, the spiritual and historical trauma of Native American holocaust and genocide is to be represented in various forms of bodily fevers and land drought. The colonial invasion and oppression result in not merely the epidemics but also devastating drought of spiritual and historical “fever.” As the indigenous reclaim the diseased and corrupted land, I will also delve into how Native Americans make herbs and ceremonies the sources of their healing. Tribal medicine provides a refuge from “fever” while Western medicine becomes the patient. The “tropical diseases” regenerate the tribal healing that is otherwise consigned into oblivion

by colonial White medicine.

It is then relevant to consider the concluding chapter of Michel de Certeau's *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other* (1986), "The Long March of Indians" and its significance warrants a full quotation:

Memory of the tortured body, murder, land treaties, rape, detention—the list of abuses would be long indeed but these bloody traces rising to the surface of the telecommunications media tell nothing at all of the daily reality of the violence. Imprisonments, arson, and even murder are doubtless less destructive than economic alienation, cultural domination, and social humiliation—they are less dangerous than the overall process of day-to-day ethnocide. Native Americans have a long memory. They do not forget their fallen heroes and their land under occupation by "foreigners." In their villages, they preserve a painful recognition of five centuries of colonization. Dominated but not vanquished, they keep alive the memory of what the Europeans have forgotten—a continuous series of uprisings and awakenings which have left hardly a trace in the occupiers' historiographical literature. (226–27)

This history of resistance punctuated by cruel repression is marked on Native American body while it is missing from colonialists' transmitted accounts. The inscribing of the tribal identity is exactly built upon pain inflicted by European colonists. Native American upheaval and their re-writing of history consequently constitute a prominent model for the discourse of the Other. De Certeau concludes his study by drawing upon the Native American model, in which tribal alliance is expressed through gestural relations between the body and the land, the mother earth. According to de Certeau, "this *tortured* body and another body, *the altered earth*, represent a beginning, a rebirth of the will to *construct a political association*" (227; emphasis original). The alliance between the body and land, between fever and drought, between "tortured body" and "altered earth" suggests the totality of tribal practices and functions, which essentially constitute a rebirth, a



way out of the foreclosure of white empire and disease.

Likewise, as Paula Gunn Allen proposes “a flow chart of the sacred etiology of illness” to reveal the pattern and thus dictate the treatment: “spiritual disorder to astral reflection of the disorder to etheric or ‘energy’ body to physical body” (168), what must be contacted and reconnected with universal harmony is the spirit of the ailing person. Certain illnesses can be traced back to mistreatment of the land, and treatment can be undertaken to restore harmony within the patient and within the plant/animal community that has suffered. It is the loss of harmony, an inner-world imbalance, which reveals itself in physical or psychological ailment. It also plays itself out in social ailments: violating a spiritual law leads to disharmony nation-or worldwide, which then works its way out in disease among the populace. Thus debilitating and devastating illnesses sweep through the population as the encompassing psychesphere attempts to regain its equilibrium (Allen 168–69). Both fever and drought are in effect the attempt of the body and land, as tribal agency, to regain the disturbed harmony and balance. And for the cure, rituals, ceremonies, divinations, prayers, and meditations are performed in which guiding spirits inform the practitioner of the source and treatment for the ailment so as to restore the once lost harmony and balance (Allen 168).

As New World historical research shows, upon Discovery, Native Americans died at awful rates as the result of an onslaught of disease unleashed by the Europeans. Within a few short decades after their arrival in the New World, Native populations are estimated to have been reduced by about 90 per cent in what was probably “the worst holocaust of disease” in the history of humankind<sup>4</sup>: Smallpox made its debut in 1518 if not sooner, measles followed, and within a few decades, most of Europe’s diseases had been transplanted (Kiple 367–69). Silko’s *Almanac* chronicles epidemic diseases. The novel spans 500 years, with the ancient almanac, transmitted generation after generation, as its pivotal text. Fragmented though it seems to be, it chronicles not only the pre-colonial civilization of Americas but also the time when colonial epidemics spread across the continent. The first accurate year of the almanac is 1560, identifying the first impact of

colonial disease: “The year of the plague—intense cold and fever—bleeding from nose and coughing, twisted necks and large sores erupt. Plague ravages the countryside for more than three years. Smallpox too had followed in the wake of the plague. Deaths number in the thousands” (577). Yoeme, the keeper of the ancient almanac, marries Guzman whose name metaphorically suggests the notorious Spanish colonel de Guzman. Yoeme’s marriage with Guzman thus suggests the encounter between the Europeans and the Native Americans. The marriage, according to Yoeme, is “an agreement” so that Yoeme can “watch” what the white men had done wrong to their lands and people.

In fact, the coming of the white men “Guzman” initiates an account of the diseases spreading in Americas in 1560. After that, “it was really a great darkness and the moon could not be seen at all” (577). The more spectacular examples of epidemics follow the first outbreak after contact: “1590—In the sixty-seventh year after the alien invasion, on January 3, 1590, the epidemic began: cough, chills, and fever from which people died” (577); 1617–24—Smallpox. (578); 1621—Five Ah, the plague began to spread. (578); “The Great Influenza of 1918”—as Yoeme records in her notebooks: “The day before my execution the news reaches town. At first the officials refuse to believe the reports of so many sick and dead. Influenza travels with the moist, warm winds off the coast. Influenza infects the governor and all the others. The police chief burns to death from fever” (579–80).

Silko’s passages as well as the passage of time are infected with diseases. *Almanac* is a history of disease. What is more significant, however, as Yuknavitch insightfully points out, is that in some of these “diseased” passages the land and the body share eerily similar markings (108). Instead of following the lineal progression of any chronological events, Silko represents time according to lands and bodies, both of which are “dis-eased.” While the year 1560 is identified in terms of bodily fever/coldness: “The year of the plague—intense cold and fever—bleeding from nose and coughing, twisted necks and large sores erupt. Plague ravages the country side” (577), the year 1566 is noted for the eruption of the land: “between one and two in the afternoon an

earthquake caused great destruction" (577). The land is eroding while the Native body is suffering from epidemics. Land erosion alternates with epidemic outbreaks to inflict pain. And erosion and suffering are reflected in the fragmentation of characters, the rupture of land, and fever of bodies. We read Native disease and dis-ease from the land and the body.<sup>5</sup> *Almanac* as a chronicle of diseases echoes de Certeau's critical association of "tortured body" with "another body, *the altered earth*" (227). Thus, drought and famine accompany fever: there is "mourning for water, there is mourning for bread. . . . Bloody vomit of yellow fever" (575).

These epidemics are now believed to have done at least as much as Spanish arms and audacity in toppling the Aztec and Inca Empires, decimating the indigenous population with infections to which the conquerors themselves were largely immune. It turns out that "disease was a potent factor" in the European conceptualization of indigenous society. This was especially so by the close of the nineteenth century when Europeans began to pride themselves on their scientific understanding of disease causation and mocked what they saw "as the fatalism, superstition and barbarity of indigenous responses to disease" (Arnold, "Introduction" 7). The association of diseases like smallpox, plague, cholera and malaria with the indigenous population—a development fostered by the growing understanding of disease aetiology and transmission in the late nineteenth century—entailed European pride in their innate racial and physical superiority" (Arnold, "Introduction" 8). In combat with these Old World diseases, tribal medicine has been condemned into superstition and savagery as John Smith, the founder of the first successful English colony in America, commented on Native American treatment of the sick in 1607: "The cure the sick, a man, with a Rattle, and extreame [sic] howling, showing [sic], singing and such violent gestures and Anticke [sic] actions over the patient, will sucke [sic] out blood and flegme [sic] from the patient, out the unable stomach, or any diseased place" (qtd. in Vogel, *American* 28)

Medicine becomes a contested terrain of racial inequality. Perceptions of disease and its cure exercised a critical influence on the

very character of the emerging imperial order (Arnold 1988: 8).<sup>6</sup> Tribal medicine as represented in the colonial texts is nothing more than a simple piece of witchery, and thus, bestows colonialism its legitimacy to redeem the indigenous from sickness. Euramericans were repelled by the superstitious rites and shrank from the idea that an “uncivilized” race might have the cures for any disease.

This medical degradation is furthermore fostered by the studies on physical geography since Enlightenment, which have endorsed Euramericans racial superiority and imperialism. In *Race and Enlightenment: A Reader* (1997), a recent collection of such studies, the editor Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze suggests that the philosophical reception of the Enlightenment in our times has ignored the writings on race by the major philosophical luminaries of the eighteenth century, in the Age of Reason (2). The Enlightenment thinkers could declare themselves as the givers and holders of Reason precisely because they presume reason could only come to maturity in modern Europe, whereas the inhabitants of areas outside Europe are consistently described as rationally inferior and savage (Eze 4). Kant devoted the largest period of his career to research in and teaching of anthropology and cultural geography—they are what he called the “twin” sciences. The questions of race and of the biological, geographical, and cultural distribution of humans on earth became central to Kant’s configuration of modern science. As the rise of science in the Enlightenment period overthrows the biblical story of creation and replaces the authority of religion with that of reason, Nature is understood in scientific terms, rationalized and theorized as a hierarchal system, i.e. the Great Chain of Being, in which every being, from humans down to fauna and flora, has been assigned with a “natural” position and status. More to this, human beings are categorized according to their racial origins. Natural historians such as Carl von Linné and Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon embark upon the classification of the races on the basis of an ordered hierarchy, which is “the God-given order of Nature” (von Linné 10). At the top of the human chain is the European while non-Europeans are placed as lower races on this general schema of evolutionary capacity. Scientific objectivity conflated with

quasi-religious divinity thus lays out a solid ground for the hierarchal classification of races. David Hume's 1754 version of "Of National Characters" contains the famous footnote in which he suspects "all other species of men . . . to be naturally inferior to the whites": "I am apt to suspect the negroes and in general all other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds) to be naturally inferior to the whites. There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white" (33). Hume among other Enlightenment thinkers identifies Reason among the whites while unreason is conveniently located among the non-whites, the black, the red, and the yellow. He further contends that the characters of men depend on the air and climate, and the degree of heat and cold should naturally be expected to have a mighty influence, conceiving of all the nations, "which live beyond the polar circles or between the tropics," to be inferior to the rest of the species, and "are incapable of all the higher attainments of the human mind" (32–33).

People beyond the polar circles or between the tropics are, therefore, more vulnerable to disease and illness than those Europeans of the temperate zone. The intimate connection between disease, environment, and weather in effect can be traced back to the first medical piece in the Western civilization. Hippocrates's *Airs, Waters, Places*, according to David Arnold,

falls into two parts: one medical, the other ethnographical. . . . The first part establishes the importance of medicine and physiology in relation to the environment. . . . The second part of *Airs, Waters, Places* begins abruptly: 'I now want to show . . . why races are dissimilar, showing individual physical characteristics'" (Arnold, *Problem* 15).

The contrast between Europe (the white) and other parts of the world identifies the superiority of temperate climates, which is a dominant theme that resurfaces in much of later environmentalist writing from the seventeenth century onwards.<sup>7</sup> The simple dichotomy between Europe and other parts of the world is duplicated in the

nineteenth-century colonial thesis: the contrast between temperate homeland and tropical colonies set colonies apart from Europe and placed them in a "frontier" situation which awaits the whites "benevolent transformation (Arnold, "Medicine" 1395).

Medical practices based on the knowledge of racialized body and weather, therefore, legitimate the superior political, technical and military power of the West, and hence a celebration of imperialism itself. Medicine, in conjunction with other areas of "scientific" discoveries, gives expression to the whites' faith in their own innate superiority as well as their mastery over other races as well as nature. Medicine, as David Arnold points out, registers the imperial determination to reorder the environment and to refashion indigenous cultures, histories, societies in the light of their own percepts and priorities (*Problem 17*).

Thus, while smallpox and other diseases wreak havoc across border, rippling out in currents of destructions in the Americas, European disdain against the indigenous cultures results in what David Stannard among others calls "American holocaust."<sup>8</sup> The colonialists claim to be on a mission of reason and civilization. They are furthermore "the fittest," to borrow Darwin, having evolved into the crown race of all humanity. They survive the plagues in accordance with a divine plan that favors and approves their conquest. Fever as disease in a sense is a potent feature of tropicality. And the term "tropical" suggested a uniform "natural" environment in which scientific expertise could be readily deployed and transferred. In many ways, the indigenous population in this natural environment is seen as part of that environment (Worboys 522).

This natural ecology alongside its inhabitants was nonetheless a once rich environment, which yet was destroyed by the deliberate human plundering. "The arrival of the Spanish, followed by other Europeans, brought fundamental changes to this Indian way of life," as David Arnold points out,

The Spanish settlers and adventurers turned their attention to the American mainland, with Cortes's expedition to Mexico in 1519.

But the effects of the Spanish invasion were long lasting and profound and allowed no opportunity for Native American culture and their eco-systems to re-establish themselves. (*Problem* 126)

Specifically, while disease and disorder that came with Europeans wrought ruin, the freedom and faith they found in the New World created havoc in the Native as we consider the settlement history of the whites from 1830 onwards. The Removal Act of 1830, originated by Thomas Jefferson, forced thousands of people from many tribes of the Southeast and the prairie states to leave their homeland and into exile in "Indian Territory," lands located in the southeast sector of Jefferson's "Louisiana Purchase."<sup>9</sup> Thirty or so years later, the Railroad Enabling Act, the Homestead Act, and the Indian Allotment Act were all passed shortly after the Civil War opened Western lands for settlement by eastern Americans. While legislation and treaties took the land out of tribal people, by 1870 California was all but denuded of Native people and in 1907 Indian Territory became the state of Oklahoma, originally meaning red earth. Under the provisions of Removal, Native people in Oregon, Montana, and Arizona were shipped to Oklahoma and even Georgia. The vast herds of buffalo, 60 million in extent according to the United States bureau, and the grasslands that sustained them were killed and destroyed (Allen 11-14). Along with initial destruction, furthermore, some 300 million acres of forest had been removed by the early twentieth century. There are more contemporary ecological catastrophes: two-thirds of the uranium resources in the country, one-third of all Western low-sulfur coal, and the single largest hydroelectric project are on Indian lands. The federal government has nuclear waste dump proposals for reservations. And all the nuclear-bomb sites in the continental U. S. are located on Native American lands (Seager 63).

To come to terms with the fact that this colonial country is indeed running out of frontiers, the white government in effect sacrifices not merely Native American benefits but the relationship of humans to the natural world. The result is the disappearance of indigenous peoples and species over the last 500 years since contact, which LaDuke in her

prose writing, *All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life* (1999), characterizes as “a great holocaust” (1).<sup>10</sup> While Euramerican expansion accomplishes its fullest result by treaties that ceded the tribal land to the American government in exchange for money and some land in what had been designated “Indian Territory” far to the west, destructive epidemics and genocidal warfare and forced expulsion from the Native Americans’ traditional homelands interacted to cause Native American holocaust. All the brutal acts, which colonialists have undertaken to exterminate Native people, are nonetheless covered up while their numerous deaths are attributed to epidemics that spread the continent. Disease becomes a metaphor of imperialism, a disguise of how colonizers enact their sovereignty over Natives, a smoke screen by which they cover both their slaughter of Natives and the exploitation they have done to the land, and an excuse of how they have nothing to do with the extinction of Natives. Disease represents the intersection between colonialism and racism: “The depopulation of the Americas was not . . . solely an ecological accident. . . . It was also the outcome of Europeans’ racial contempt, brutal economic policies, and their lust for land and riches” (Arnold, “Introduction” 85). Accordingly, disease becomes a “silencing contesting ground” in which millions of the natives die inconsequentially (Arnold, *Problem* 85). Disease is not a “pure accident” but a complex issue of how colonialists, scientists, historians and anthropologists may become complicit in imperialism.

Therefore, disease becomes dis-ease: fever and drought—the dis-eased body and land—are the inscriptions of colonialism. In tracing epidemics throughout early colonial years, *Almanac* intertwines feverish body with dry land. In Silko’s *Almanac*, indeed, while diseases appear in various forms of fever among the indigenous, fever furthermore travels with tropical hotness: “the news reaches town. . . . Influenza travels with moist, warm winds off the coast” (580). Fever becomes a feature of the tropical.<sup>11</sup> And drought and heat become prominent occurrences in the novel. Years before either Seese or Cherie have ever seen Tucson, something has changed. The drought has left their land no green. In the dust-haze any lawns or grass that might have been alive is indistinguishable from the cement of buckling



sidewalks. Even the so-called desert “landscape” is gaunt:

Even the so-called desert “landscaping” was gaunt; the prickly pear and cholla cactus had shriveled into leathery, green tongues. The ribs of the giant saguaros had shrunk into themselves. The date palms and short Mexican palms were sloughing scaly, gray fronds, many of which had broken in the high winds and lay scattered in the street. (63–64)

Ironically, there used to be plentiful fresh water in Tucson, which is what the word *tucson* means in Papago (190).<sup>12</sup> And Leah’s dream-city plans model on Tucson and “revolve around water, lake after lake, and each of the custom-built neighborhoods linked by quaint waterways . . . Leah’s ‘someplace’ for obtaining all the cheap water she wanted would be from the deep wells she was going to drill” (375). The arrival of the whites alongside their colonial exploitation represented in Leah’s drilling for cheap water unfortunately entails drastic change. Epidemics, drought, and death befall this borderland and its inhabitants, which Natives understand as “The Reign of Fire-Eye Macaw”:

Some knew it as “The Reign of Fire-Eye Macaw,” which was the same as saying “Death-Eye Dog” because the sun had begun to burn with a deadly light, and the heat of this burning eye looking down on all the wretched humans and plants and animals had caused the earth to speed up too—the way the heat makes turtles shiver in a last frenzy of futile effort to reach shade. (257)<sup>13</sup>

In depicting years of dry winds and effects of the sunlight which have been devastating, Silko represents Native trauma in diverse metaphors of heat: “a deadly light,” “this burning eye,” and “fire-eye.” Heat is comprehended in accordance with a mythic prophecy found in ancient almanacs, a subject which I shall explore later in this paper. Specifically, accompanying the feverish diseases which spread across the border, the continent, there is “(t)wenty-year drought: the hooves of the deer crack in the heat; the ocean burned so high the face of the sun

was devoured; the face of the sun darkened with blood, then disappeared” (576). While Tucson is variously represented in the novel as a commodity (661), a site of war (656), a site of sacred tradition (762), an allegory for Mexico (650, 661)<sup>14</sup>—a border between possibilities, Tucson is primarily a place of heat. Silko portrays Tucson as a place where historical slaughters were committed—there are warfare, murders, exploitation, smuggling of drugs and illegal organs, etc., and all that Natives have experienced seems to be acted out in different forms of heat.

Silko’s chronicle of these historical slaughters accords with heat in the land and body. While “on January 3, 1590, the epidemic began: cough, chills, and fever from which people died,” “the face of the moon was covered with darkness soon after the sunset. It was really a great darkness and the moon could not be seen. The surface of the earth could not be seen at all” (577). The almanac records time by relentlessly referencing land and body in a close symbiotic relationship: “Twisted necks and large sores” are conflated with “ravaged countryside,” earthquakes and cough and chills are conflated with “the surface of the earth,” as Yuknavitch discloses (108). Through body and land, *Almanac of the Dead* gives voice to diseased body and ravaged land. The land as well as the body registers Native American psychic wounds through fevers and droughts.

The cause and end result of fever and drought have significantly been predicted in the almanac: “11 AHU was the year of the return of fair Quetzalcoatl. But the mention of the artificial white circle in the sky could only have meant the return of Death Dog and his eight brothers: plague, earthquake, drought, famine, incest, insanity, war, and betrayal” (572) and “the deer die: drought” (574). Silko conceives of contemporary reality in accordance with the prophecy of an ancient almanac. The ancient almanac as kept intact by Yoeme and later by her two granddaughters is not dead but rather contains a living power which predicts the present and future occurrences.<sup>15</sup> As they transcribe the almanac, things indeed take place. Drought and illness accompanied by colonial invasion are closely associated in a mythic vision of the ancient wisdom: “Dog= rainless storms. The dog carries a

lighted torch: drought, great heat, heaped-up death" (574). Yoeme said "[t]he old-time people had warned that Mother Earth would punish those who defiled and despoiled her": "Fierce, hot winds would drive away the rain clouds; irrigation wells would go dry; all the plants and animals would disappear" (632). Drought and death are configured in the tribal way as a retribution from nature and land as fever is in effect an acting out as resistance to colonial exploitation. Native American work is primarily concerned with the land and how the whites "steal more Indian land. It was white men coming with their pieces of paper" (116)! Yoeme said the veins of silver had dried up because the mining engineers had dried them up: "Years of dry winds and effects of the sunlight on milky-white skin had been devastating. . . . The white man had violated the Mother Earth" (120–21).

As a matter of act, the mining of toxic chemicals that follows creates even worse disaster to Native lands. Native lands have long since "suffered from the polluting effects of heavy industry, toxic dumping, contamination of air and drinking water from off-reservation sources, and from fallout from nuclear testing and arms production." In particular, "they have been damaged by the impact of mining operations on reservations," as Jace Weaver suggests (109). Silko specifically identifies the site of the uranium mining as located near Paguete, one of seven villages in the Laguna Pueblo reservation in New Mexico. The disappearance of the Beautiful Lake, Kawaik, where, in Navajo cosmology, lives emerge from the Fourth World below, the loss of water in the Pueblo, becomes a drastic reality as the tribe can not prevent the mining of their land. The orchards and fields of melons are gone, as Silko says. Nearly all the land to the east and south of Paguete village has been swallowed by the mine; its open pit gapes within two hundred yards of the village (Silko, "Fifth World" 126–27). All that which Yoeme identifies as "a great misfortune for us" in her old notebooks actually occurs (Silko, *Almanac* 135).

In Silko's first novel *Ceremony*, this "misfortune" in effect strikes Tayo, the protagonist, as a sort of apocalyptic revelation. The mine, which "began to flood with water from subterranean springs" (243) early in the spring of 1943 on the Cebolleta land grant, was in actuality

the biggest open-pit uranium mine in North America. Later after fighting in the Second World War, as Tayo returned and approached to his old home, the sandstone and dirt taken from inside the mesa, piled up in mounds and in long rows, "like fresh graves" (245), became evidences to identify colonial exploitation of the land. This echoes the two photos taken respectively in 1950's and 1960's in *Storyteller*, which Silko contrasts: the mesas and hills that appear in the first photo are gone and swallowed by the mine in the second (*Storyteller* 80-81). As *Ceremony* progresses, Tayo realizes that the Trinity Site in Alamogordo of New Mexico, "where [the whites] exploded the first atomic bomb, was only three hundred miles to the southeast, at White Sands. And the top-secret laboratories where the bomb had been created were deep in the Jemez Mountains, on land the Government took from Cochiti Pueblo" (245-46). It is this apocalyptic vision that connects Tayo's fragmentary memory of his days in the Asian battlefield and those with his tribal people in a land where "the last bony cattle wandering the dry canyons had died in choking summer duststorms" (244). He finally arrives at a point of what would be called "convergence," where the fates of "all living things" and "the earth" have been laid (246). While the two atomic explosions in Hiroshima and Nagasaki of Japan resulted in one of the greatest casualties in human history, Laguna people and land suffered from drastic drought of colonists' evil doings as well. As he locates the uranium mining, the bomb creation, and the atomic tests on his reservation, Tayo envisions his connection with other lands and people across the Pacific Ocean. For, from that time on,

human beings were one clan again, united by the fate the destroyers planned for all of them, for all living things; united by a circle of death that devoured people in cities twelve thousand miles away, victims who had never known these mesas, who had never seen the delicate colors of the rocks which boiled up their slaughter. (246)

Tayo becomes overwhelmed by this revelation as he pronounces "the pattern of the ceremony was completed there" (246). He cries the

relief he feels “at finally seeing the pattern, the way all the stories fit together—the old stories, the war stories, their stories—to become the story that was still being told” (246).<sup>16</sup>

The mining that destroyed lives across time and distance in 1945 in *Ceremony* was resumed in *Almanac* in 1949 when “the United States needed uranium for the new weaponry, especially in the face of Cold War” (34).<sup>17</sup> To delve into these devastating events against Native living environments, Silko in her *Almanac* contains not only indigenous tribal almanacs as prophecies of destructive colonization but also sections of old colonial American almanacs (570) added freely by the keepers, where tribal and colonial histories in effect intertwine. Reading *Almanac*, Joni Adamson insightfully pinpoints that Euro-Americans continue to stray away from the value of interconnectedness of all lives in the wholesale ecosystem. For, while “sections of late-seventeenth-century American almanacs . . . employ [mother earth] imagery in profusion [and] advise [colonial farmers] about how to make healing herbal remedies,” sections of late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century almanacs kept by the twin sisters, Lecha and Zeta, “advise colonists to see the earth as commodity and to master nature’s processes for profit . . . they show how European consciousness about nature has been deliberately constructed over time to support colonialist objectives” (Adamson 143).<sup>18</sup> Europeans have since suffered from “a sort of blindness to the world” (*Almanac* 224), failing to recognize the complexity of nonhuman beings in the ecology of the world. The imperial commercial benefit and militant agenda sacrifice indigenous cultures and lands in the modern world, a world Silko’s Yaqui characters feel is in danger of losing its spiritual identity to technology, prejudice, empty values, and a lack of understanding of the interconnectedness of all life on earth, hence the rise of the intertwined issues of ecocide and genocide. In “America’s Debt to the Indian Nations: Atoning for a Sordid Past,” Silko quotes a report issued by the U. S. Commission on Civil Rights to indicate the stakes of the special interests at the expense of Native tribes are high:

Indian water rights to the Colorado, Rio Grande, San Juan, Gila,

and Salt Rivers will have far-reaching effects on the growth and quality of life in Los Angeles, Phoenix, Tucson and El Paso. Indian tribes control 3 percent of the total national oil and gas reserves and 7 to 13 percent of U.S. coal deposits. Indian tribes control a large number of extensive uranium deposits. (75-76).

This report in effect accounts for the federal policy of relocating “the Indians” around Colorado River so as to remove the “impediment to Amer-European designs on the continent” (Weaver, *That the People* 17). “The Indians” are vanishing, for, as Silko relates in her interview with Ellen L. Arnold concerning the writing of her most recent novel, *Gardens in the Dunes*:

I had this idea about these two sisters, and I knew right away that they weren't Pueblo people. I knew that they were from the Colorado River. There are some Uto-Aztec groups mixed in with the Yuman groups over there. These were some of the people that lived in some of the side canyons on the Colorado River. *So many of the cultures along the Colorado River were completely wiped out. There's no trace of them left.* And it was done by gold miners and ranchers. They didn't even have to use the Army on them. Just the good upstanding Arizona territory, the good old boys, slaughtered all these tribes of people that are just gone forever. *So I decided that my characters would be from one of these remnant, destroyed, extinct groups. They'd be some of the last of them.* (163-64; emphases added)

Silko commences her third novel with the last survivors to the west of the Colorado River: “the Sand Lizard people were never numerous, but now Grandma, Mama, and baby Sister [Sister Salt] were the lonely Sand Lizard people living at the old gardens” (17). People all round have difficulty believing the bloodshed and cruelty attributed to the strangers. But the reports are true: “This happened long, long ago but the people never forgot the hunger and suffering of that first winter the invaders appeared. The invaders were dirty people who carried

disease and fever" (15). As she does with *Almanac*, to chronicle Native survival in facing invading armies and diseases, Silko initiates her narrative in *Gardens* with fever, famine, and drought. The land acts out its trauma in diverse forms of drought, famine, storms, and disease, which remind one of the tribal etiology: the invaders' violating the spiritual law leads to disharmony nation-or worldwide, which then works its way out in disease among the populace. The sentence that immediately follows the opening catastrophe of hunger and disease, bloodshed and cruelty, suggests a journey be taken to return to the original home-base, "the old gardens" (15).

Silko sets her novel on the late-nineteenth-century frontier, about six to seven years after the 1890 Wounded Knee Massacre, as the white colonists expanded their territory. But the temporal frame at the outset of the narrative is drawn back to hundreds of years ago when the Sand Lizard people remained peacefully at their old gardens until "a gang of gold prospectors surprised them; all those who were not killed were taken prisoner. Grandma Fleet lost her young husband to a bullet; only the women and children remained, captives at Fort Yuma" (16), leaving only four survivors: Grandma Fleet, Mama, Sister Salt, and Indigo.

If *Almanac* emphasizes the horrifying plagues alongside endless drought at the post-Columbian eras, *Gardens* pivots more around the heat over the land as dramatization of Native catastrophe, which begins with the disappearance of a giant snake. Grandma Fleet relates the contemporary drastic condition in a mythic vision as she talks about "the big snake many times because he was almost as old as she was, and the spring belonged to him" (36). For Grandma Fleet, all desert springs have resident snakes. If people kill the snakes, the precious water should disappear. As Grandma Fleet says, "whatever you do, don't offend the old snake who lives at the spring" (36). The source of bodily disease and land dis-ease resides in the violation of spiritual law and tribal people regard fever and drought as an acting out of the disharmony at all scales—among humans and between humans and non-humans.

Indeed, throughout the novel, there are continuous colonial exploitations of the land, taking the land as a subjugated biosphere with

for the plants. A few choice pumpkins, squash, and bean plants [are] simply left on the sand beneath the mother plants to shrivel dry and return to the earth. Next season, after the arrival of the rain, beans, squash, and pumpkins [sprout] up between the dry stalks and leaves of the previous year. (*Gardens* 15)

Sand Lizard's teachings entail mutual and regenerative relationships among all living creatures. And each contributes to the regenerative circle and should therefore be respected. As the Sand Lizard and her children cultivate their gardens, herbs become not simply food but medicine for survival. For years of little rain, tribal people count on amaranth and sunflowers, which they believe the Sand Lizard has given them. For times of drought they get succulent little roots and stems growing deep beneath the sand. Later the narrator also reflects on a time when Sister Salt suffered from "ghost sickness, and the school staff feared typhoid, though she had no fever. The twins [Maytha and Vedna] brought her the fresh datura root she requested, and she rubbed it against her cheeks and forehead to ask its help" (203).

The people call themselves Sand Lizard's children as they consider Sand Lizards to be their ancestors and receive aid from them constantly. From time to time, Grandma Fleet and others still visit their old houses to feed these ancestral spirits. And "[i]n a time of emergency, the old gardens [can] be counted on for sanctuary" (15). "The Sand Lizard people [remain] at the old gardens peacefully for hundreds of years because the invaders feared the desert beyond the river" (16). Gathering and planting herbs become their ways of life.

Grandma Fleet's teaching, nonetheless, can hardly prevail as soon as the white invaders dominate their lands. Silko soon pushes the temporal frame at the outset of the narrative hundreds of years forward to a time when the whites expand. Throughout the novel, then, there are numerous occasions when herbs are abused to the capitalist benefit: Edward, for instance, "[makes] it his practice to collect samples of local and regional agriculture" as he knows the Natives may "possess unknown medicinal plants with commercial potential" (86); "[h]e purchase[s] bunches of mysterious dried flowers beneficial to weak



hearts and bald heads; he [finds] strange roots in the shape of a baby's fingers, said to aid in digestion; [h]e methodically peer[s] into the stalls and shops that [are] closed lest he miss some unusual item" (86). Edward is obsessed with the classificatory system of botany as he sees himself as "a man of science" (77). "[A] work party," using Edward's notes, classification, and maps, "retrace[s] his steps to collect the large quantities of specimens needed for the displays at the Centennial Exposition" (92), while "[t]he focus of the exhibit [is] to be the commerce, industry, and natural history of the Gulf and the Caribbean Sea" (91); and white brokers continue to come upriver and demand the entire tribal stock of a species to corner the market: "Indians who did not cooperate were flogged or tortured" (133).

Medicine becomes, in a sense, the patient, finding itself "functioning within a diseased (and infectious) world" (Stanford 27). *Almanac* interrogates medicine's profit motive. Its narrator notes that the tribal sorcerers become rich by "making up and selling various odd sorts of alleged 'tribal healing magics' and assorted elixirs, teas, balms, waters, crystals, and capsules to the city people, mostly whites" who "anxiously purchased indigenous cures for their dark nights of the soul on the continents where Christianity had repeatedly violated its own canons" (478). As Lecha and Zeta collect materials to be added into their almanac fragments, they find patent-drug companies have proliferated ancient farmers' almanacs and medicine shows give away almanacs as advertisements.<sup>20</sup> Accordingly, tribal medicine is inextricably bound to the ongoing colonial enterprise of domination, appropriation, and abuse. In *Gardens*, while tribal survivors lament the loss of their ancient garden, only dry lands remain, no longer producing healing herbs. The lands remember the muted history and bear the unspeakable pain, where "[t]he brief twilight of the tropics began to give way to darkness and Edward [felt] a growing panic that sent him walking faster and faster until he was running for the riverbank" (134). Indigo thus travels in search of gardens. "Where are your gardens?" as Indigo addresses to a woman. The woman points at the hills above the beach, where Indigo sees only weeds and shrubs.

Nevertheless, in direct contrast to each of these casualties, both of

Silko's novels like her first one, *Ceremony*, envision an indigenous force that continually gathers strength for the earth's reclamation and healing. "The land of the dead is a land of flowers and abundant food" (572), as Silko affirms in her *Almanac*, where the crowded and decaying notebooks of the almanac, like Betonie's medicine bundle in *Ceremony*, collect the medicinal detritus to bear witness to indigenous curative energies. The almanac predicts that the forces of the earth will work in the service of Native Americans. The land of the dead is also a land of flowers and abundant food. While earthquakes, floods, and famines lead to "civil strife, civil crisis, civil war" (756), all chances for uprising or change. Storms "bruise" the land, and, as Lidia Yuknavitch suggests, earthquakes and floods "leave scars we might ordinarily associate with a human immune system under attack" (109). While the human exploitation of lands is always accompanied by natural disasters, these disasters—plague, starvation, famine, drought, and cholera—are merely code names for invasion and occupation. "Human immune system" will eventually take over to fight against disease and dis-ease.

Precisely, those old almanacs do not just tell about when to plant or harvest and the days yet to come—drought or flood, plague, civil war or invasion (137), they prophesy cures as well. While the open-pit uranium mine has been closed for years, in *Almanac*, as he draws near to where the mine used to be, Sterling knows that "the buffalos [are] returning to the Great Plains" (758). The almanac is said to have "living power within it, a power that would bring all tribal people of the Americas together to retake the land" (569). While the discovery of America is described as violence through robbery, "[a] beginning of vexation, a beginning of robbery with violence" (576), the almanac contains repressed materials that we should read "as a form of resistance" (Yuknavitch 104). The "guardians" of history in *Almanac* are charged with finding and recording the fragments of history before they disappear. To combat disease/dis-ease, Native Americans seize hold of a memory which is essential for their survival, to appropriate a memory as it indeed "flashes up in a moment of danger," to borrow Walter Benjamin's words (255). "Without the almanacs, the people would not be able to recognize the days and months yet to come, days

and months that would see the people retake their land" (570). As the almanac prophecy realizes itself at the end of *Almanac*, tribal people rejoice at the reappearance of the stone snake: "The snake didn't care about the uranium tailings. . . . Burned, radioactive, with all humans dead, the earth would still be sacred. Man was too insignificant to desecrate her" (762).

Specifically, in *Almanac* Silko refers to Quetzalcoatl, the plumed serpent in the Aztec myths, which is widely identified with water, fertility and, by extension, life itself. One aspect of Quetzalcoatl, Ehecatl, is the god of wind, who appears in the breath of living beings and the breezes that bring the fructifying rain clouds. Quetzalcoatl is therefore closely associated with balance, harmony and life in indigenous culture, particularly in Aztec myths.<sup>21</sup> If the disappearance of the snake indicates loss of water, and hence the subsequent misfortunes as indicated earlier in this current paper, at the end of *Almanac*, a giant stone snake appears in the uranium mine, indicating the return or rebirth of the dead and thus making the destruction and regeneration a circle that accords with natural rhythm: "The snake was looking south, in the direction from which the twin brothers [Tacho and El Feo] and the people would come" (763).<sup>22</sup> As Silko herself reassures in her interview, "The rain will follow the Twin Brothers with the sacred macaws and the thousands of people walking North. Rain will not follow if La Escapía is forced to use her hand-held rockets to protect the Twin Brothers [Tacho and and El Feo] and the people from attacks by the U. S." (Coltelli 132).

As a matter of fact, in an essay titled "Fifth World: The Return of Ma Ah Shra True Ee, The Giant Serpent," Silko further relates the mythic serpent as a contemporary actual occurrence that sees to colonial exploitation of Native lands and the lands' retribution against it, while she narrates the finding of "a giant stone snake formation . . . one morning in the spring of 1980 by two employees of the Jackpile uranium mine" ("Fifth World" 126). This scared white uranium miners but " . . . soon there was a great deal of excitement among Pueblo religious people because the old stories mention a giant snake who is a messenger for the Mother Creator" (126). The myth of the giant serpent

seems revitalized into reality, and tribal people are encouraged by “the sacred messenger spirit/from the Fourth World below” (127), as they pronounce, “*Ma ah shra true ee*, the sacred messenger, will appear again and again. Nothing can stop that. Not even a uranium mine” (134).

Thus, fever alongside drought should be read as forms of *resistance to the disease*: “an affection of life striving to break away from death” (qtd. in Foucault 178), when the immune system finally functions. It has a salutary value: fever is an excretory movement, purificatory in intention as its etymology shows—*februlare* is to expel the shades of the dead ritually from a house (Foucault 179). Disease carries a potential for salvation. In *Gardens*, therefore, plague “fever” is transformed into pledged “fervor” for the return and rebirth of Earth and land as an animate “Mother” (625), which is embodied in the performance of Ghost Dance both at the outset and near the end of the novel:

[I]f the Paiutes and all the other Indians danced this dance, then the used-up land would be made whole again and the elk and the herds of buffalo killed off would return. The dance was a peaceful dance, and the Paiutes wished no harm to white people; . . . If they danced the dance, then they would be able to visit their dear ones and beloved ancestors. The ancestor spirits were there to help them . . . falling into a trance ] they all were happy and excited because they had seen the Earth reborn. (23–24)

Unlike the ghost in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*, the spirits and specters come back not to haunt but to “help.” The dancers are careful to drag their feet lightly along the ground to keep themselves in touch with Mother Earth. As they are moving right to left because that is the path followed by the sun, the indigenous bodies correspond with the earth body to uncover a comic harmony that has long been disturbed by the alien invasion. Only by dancing can they hope to bring the Messiah, the Christ, who would bring with him all their beloved family members and friends who had moved on to the spirit world after the hunger and

the sadness got to be too much for them: “The invaders made the Earth get old and want to die” (26).

It is then in the bodily practice of Ghost Dance, to dance attuned to the cosmic rhythm, where the past is retrieved to meet the present and the mundane is conflated with the sacred. What is conveyed verbally in a succinct report—as Hattie follows in the *New York Times*, “six or seven years before, newspapers reported the Indians claimed to have a Messiah, a Christ of their own, for whom they gathered to perform a dance” (262)—is represented ritually to evoke the joint body of the individual, the tribal, and the earth. Wovoka, the Ghost Dance leader, says it is done “to repel diseases and sickness, especially the influenza,” which we know killed millions of people at its outbreak at the turn of the century (32).

What is healing and redemptive then is expressed through gestural relations between the indigenous body and the mother earth. All beings are interconnected and intertwined in the web of creation. The tortured body that suffers from murder, massacre, detention, dislocation, hunger, and disease, joined by another body, the altered earth, returns in order to be reborn.

Silko’s opening the novel with Ghost Dance is thus a deliberate attempt to respond to a threatening situation—to assure tribal survival by recounting the ancient weaving of a spirited tribal land. In this ritual account as well as bodily performance is situated an ancient belief in returning the dead to life. All this is far from what Edward wisecracks as “religious hysteria” (320) or the federal officials consider as “a secret army in disguise” (45); this is rather an act of survival, a joint will of the tortured body and the altered earth to be reborn.<sup>23</sup>

Consequently, the material life is highly charged with spiritual energy that is circulated and nurtures the cosmos. While “garden” is a prominent metaphor, functioning to define historical paradigms, cultural systems, concepts of thinking, and ultimately the connection between man and nature, the worldviews, Grandma Fleet is the one who cultivated the old gardens: “[T]he more strange and unknown the plant, the more interested Grandma Fleet was; she loved to collect and trade seeds. Others did not grow a plant unless it was food or

medicine. . . . Grandma said they never found a plant they couldn't use for some purpose" (83–84). She is the tribal gatherer in Paula Gunn Allen's definition:

Gathering is a discipline that requires respect on a primary spiritual level. It develops refined powers of observation and discernment in the ritualist and extensive knowledge of seasons, weather, astronomy, and healing, conferring on its devotee a degree of mental sophistication that rivals that of physicians, scientists, computer experts, or metaphysicians. (*Almanac* 12)

There are, furthermore, constant retrievals of Indigo's Native American garden of blessed subsistence, vividly pictured in Grandma Fleet's efforts to transform the desert into a garden as their home base of survival.

Indigo becomes the one who endeavors to sustain, transmit or even transform the tribal legacy by drawing upon joint efforts with women across the ocean. As Indigo receives a package "that held a small silk-bound notebook where Aunt Bronwyn hand-printed the names (in English and Latin) of medicinal plants and the best conditions and methods to grow them," she realizes that "[a]ll the other pages in the green silk notebook were blank, ready for [her] to draw or write anything she wanted. Bundled on top of the notebook with white ribbons were dozens of waxed paper packets of seeds wrapped in white tissue paper" (267). With seeds to be planted and blank pages to be filled in, Indigo is on her way to becoming not only a writing subject but a historian and a physician to redeem her tribal culture and populace from extinction, to "return the dead to life," so to speak. The simplest vehicle of achieving this is a pen/pencil:

[Indigo] took the little pencil that belonged with the notebook and practiced copying the Latin names and the English names on a blank page: monkshood, wolfsbane, aconite, *Aconitum napellus*. . . . Below the picture she copied its medicinal uses from Aunt Bronwyn's list: anodyne, febrifuge, and diuretic. Hattie

added these words to her spelling list, so Indigo wrote their definitions right beside them. "Anodyne" is Greek for "no pain"; "febrifuge" she remembered as "refuge from fever." Hattie told her the English word "febrile" came from the Latin *febris*, for "fever"; "diuretic" was from the Greek for "urine." (282)

Like a novice, Indigo counts on women of different ethnic origins to work together for completing a medicine book. It is a medical text of hybridity, mingling both the pre-modern and the tribal to combat the modern tyranny of science, capitalism, and colonialism in complicity with one another. Before any tribal medicine path can be inscribed as memory gets retrieved and transmitted, however, Silko closes the novel with a return to the old gardens. A down-to-earth practicality is privileged as women plant the seeds, nurture and gather the flowers, and share a connected consciousness. The end meets the beginning—it is Grandma Fleet's tribal way that is after all prevailing. In her notes on the novel, Silko points out that she mingles lots of elements including "orchids, gladiolus, ancient gardens, Victorian gardens, Native American gardens, Old European figures of Snake-bird Goddesses" to write a novel about Indigo's journey (480). The authorial act of naming is redeemable. Those elements nominated in Silko's narrative could be arranged into four basic elements which "have ever danced together": "women, magic, tribes, and earth," to borrow Paula Gunn Allen's words (1992:24). Silko's novel demonstrates how those four elements "have ever danced together" and how those four elements have been once repressed and sundered apart and are now recovered.

If *Almanac* chronicles tribal history (time) primarily in terms of feverish bodies and dry lands, *Gardens* maps tribal geography (place) in terms of curing herbs and healing rituals. Whereas *Almanac* depicts disease/dis-ease, *Gardens* focuses on healing and cure. They should be read as twin texts and twins are in fact recurrent prototypes in Native American writings. *Gardens* commences and ends with Ghost Dance. Through the predominant metaphor of "garden," it furthermore rejuvenates the exploited dry lands with herbs and plants that hold moisture to the earth. At beginning, Grandma Fleet sorts her collection

of seeds while she talks. She has everything prepared by the time the rains come so they can get the seeds into the damp earth promptly. Grandma becomes lively “as she [sings] out a welcome to the [rain] clouds” (47). She oftentimes explains “the differences in the moisture of the sand between the dunes”: “some of the smaller dunes were too dry along their edges and it was difficult to grow anything there; in marginal areas like these it was better to let the wild plants grow” (47). Rain as well as herbs is heavily charged with sacred spirituality as Grandma Fleet “greet[s] the clouds with tears in her eyes,” thinking of “their beloved ancestors return[ing] to them as precious rain” (47–48).

Different plants, trees, and herbs permeate the novel as Silko's characters cultivate gardens of semi-tropical vegetation. Silko privileges tropicality, which is definitely an act of writing back to colonial invention that the tropical features inferiority. Heat therefore no longer conveys infectious germs but curative energies in *Gardens*. “On the highest dune, near the spring, Grandma Fleet [digs] herself a little pit house in the fine sand right below the mound where she plant[s] the apricot seeds.” She also “arrange[s] willow branches in a latticework to hold more willow branches to form a roof over the dugout” (50). Passages concerning planting, flowers, and herbs become major threads that tie the characters intimately together. “After the first beans and squash [are] harvested, Grandma Fleet [leaves] her shelter by the peach seedlings less and less often. The girls [help] her walk through the gardens, where she survey[s] the sunflowers, some small and pale yellow, others orange-yellow and much taller than they were; then she examined the brilliant red amaranth. . . . The gardens were green with corn and bush beans” (50–51). And the night Indigo dreams she comes back home at the old gardens, “where the sunflowers and corn plants and squash” once grew, tall gladiolus bloomed in all colors” (304). As the twins Maytha and Vedna arrive at the garden, even from a distance “the bright ribbons of purple, red, yellow, and black gladiolus flowers were impossible to miss, woven crisscross over the terrace gardens, through the amaranth, pole beans, and sunflowers” (474). “The twins especially like the ‘speckled corn’ effect of the color combinations Indigo [makes] with the gladiolus she plant[s] in rows to



resemble corn kernels." Maytha as well as Indigo favor "lavender, purple, white, and black planting," but Sister Salt and Vedna "prefer[s] the dark red, black, purple, pink, and white planting. . . . [i]n the morning sky blue morning glories wreathed the edges of the terraces like necklaces" (476). Down the shoulder of the dune to the hollow between the dunes, "silver white gladiolus with pale blues and pale lavenders glow[s] among the great dark jade datura leaves. Just wait until sundown—the fragrance of the big datura blossoms with the gladiolus flowers [will] make them swoon, [as] Indigo promise[s]" (476).

It is in their gardens where the material meets the sacred and the mundane 'conflates with the arcane. Indigo dreams of the big rattlesnake (304) while the snake actually returns to the old garden to greet Sister Salt (477). *Gardens* ends where it begins, with the tribal sisters gathering stones and circling them to make "the spirit house of the Lord" (454). Tribal people join the sisters to dance, and "as the drum call[s] them to the spirit house, . . . they [sing] the new songs, each in a different language—Sand Lizard, Paiute, Chemehuevi, Mojave, and Walapai—because in the presence of the Messiah, all languages [are] understood by everyone" (465). This political coalition, as de Certeau points out, is triggered through an alliance between the "tortured body and another body, *the altered earth*" (227) to strike a will to rebirth and power. They dance slowly and carefully, trailing their feet gently to caress Mother Earth, as they watch the storm clouds move on (*Gardens* 465–66). Lecha in *Almanac* conceives of unspeakable illness as arising from human separation from the Earth as Silko writes, "[t]hey all had given the loss different names . . . but Lecha knew the loss was their connection with the earth" (718). Addressing Buffalo as their "slain sister" and Condor as their "slain brother" (*Gardens* 467), Silko's characters in *Ghost Dance* connect the dead with the living, the human and nonhuman, the spiritual and the physical to rejuvenate the earth. While historically the *Ghost Dance* led to the massacre of hundreds of Sioux at Wounded Knee in 1890, by inscribing this traumatic past in her text, Silko represents it almost in a form of repetition compulsion, in the performativity of the indigenous

bodies attuned with the altered earth body and exploited lands. Silko reassures, by inscribing her tribal memory, “[t]he Ghost Dance has never ended, it has continued, and the people have never stopped dancing” (*Almanac* 724): “Rejoice! Mountains and valleys! The mighty river runs free once more! Rejoice! We are no longer solitary beings alone and cut off. Now we are one with the earth, our mother” (733).<sup>24</sup> As Silko uncovers the indigenous ritual as the site for representing the hidden past and repressed memory, she invokes the bodies—the individual, the tribal, and the earth body—as places of vibrant connection, historical memory, and tribal knowledge. Both of her recent novels elaborate on the disease which involves and thus paradoxically “unifies” the people, the tribe, and the earth, echoing de Certeau’s “political association” of the “tortured body” and “altered earth.” Finally, as Gerald Vizenor made explicit in his essay “Native American Indian Literature: Critical Metaphors of the Ghost Dance,” Native American works themselves can be seen as the literary equivalent of a Ghost Dance, which is to create, primarily, “a literature of liberation that enlivens tribal survivance” (qtd. in Huffstetler 9).<sup>25</sup>

The destruction of the body and land has coincided in history. While history becomes our illness as the almanac of Silko’s characters shows us, in water there dwells the regenerative, life-giving power. *Almanac* structures fever and drought as chronicle while *Gardens* retrieves earth’s healing power with rain clouds, semi-tropical gardens, and the flora and fauna which conserve enormous curative energies. In fever and drought, therefore, is contained a living power, a potential for salvation, for the body as well as the earth to develop its immune system to combat disease. This paper is eventually double-edged. Drawing upon Silko’s novels, I employ “fever” as a convenient approach to not only a critique of European colonial exploitation but a revival of Native American cultural representation of heat as resistance. As Calabazas in *Almanac* acclaims, “we [Natives] are here thousands of years before the first whites. We are here before maps or quit claims” (216). Treating disease as a site of contact and possible eventual convergence between the Western pre-modern and indigenous peoples in the Americas, this paper concludes with the lines from the

Hippocratic Oath, which is valued as ethical guidelines of modern Western medical profession: there is, indeed, “art to medicine as well as science, and that warmth, sympathy, and understanding may outweigh the surgeon’s knife or the chemist’s drug. I will remember that I do not treat a fever chart, a cancerous growth, but a sick human being.”<sup>26</sup> To add to this, we count on Native American wisdom to retrieve yet the interconnectedness between human and nature, and between body and land as we do read about how in Silko’s novels fever resonates with drought, diseased body with dis-eased land, and eventually locate the healing in balanced and harmonious relations between the human and earth.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> For a detailed account of how “fever” has undergone the Western medical scrutinization, refer to Foucault’s “Crisis in Fevers” in *The Birth of the Clinic*, pp. 174–94.

<sup>2</sup> Refer to Alfred W. Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900–1900* (1986) 196. In *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (1972). Both are cited extensively in David Arnold’s *The Problem of Nature: Environment, Culture and European Expansion* (1996).

<sup>3</sup> For the connection among colonial expansion, tropical island Edens, and early empires, refer to Richard Grove’s *Green Imperialism* (1995), in which the author highlights how the oceanic island “Eden” is invented as a “dyadic ‘other’ to be realized and expanded as a great project and partner of the other more obviously economic projects of early colonialism” (1995: 4). Also Lawrence Buell’s *The Environmental Imagination* (1995) regards the quintessential tradition of American nature writings as originating from “the old world desire of the pastoral” topped by the American cultural nationalism that celebrates the Edenic wilderness as evidenced in Henry David Thoreau’s *Walden*. To reevaluate the root of this imperial botanical gaze, refer to Part I of Karla Armbruster and Kathleen R. Wallace’s (eds.) *Beyond Nature Writing* (2001), pp. 29–110. For an earlier analysis of the development of the botanical garden in the Western world as an attempt to recreate the Garden of Eden, refer

to John Prest, *The Garden of Eden: the Botanic Garden and the Re-creation of Paradise* (1988).

<sup>4</sup> Concerning Native American population, early twentieth-century historians assumed a population of about 8 million total in 1492. Since that time, however, archeological evidences, combined with demographic projects which factor in disease spread have significantly raised that number. Some estimates range as high as 112 million at time of first contact. More conservative projections run around 57–72 million. See Shannon Duffy's "The Americas on the Eve of the European Invasion." American historian David E. Stannard believes that the Indian population before Conquest should run from 75 to 100 million. This number dropped massively by the early 1660s due to the violence of the colonial warfare, imperial cruelty, and newly-introduced European diseases, which tore across the American Native populations in the years after 1492. Demographic recovery was nonetheless extremely slow among the Native Americans. Post-colonial STS (Science and Technology Studies) scholar David Arnold avers that the population dropped from around 75 to 100 million to a mere 250,000 by the middle of the eighteenth century (78). Winona LaDuke in her *All Our Relations* also suggests that over 2000 nations of indigenous peoples have gone extinct in the western hemisphere since Discovery, which is, according to her, "a great holocaust" (1). While the impact of epidemic diseases may have been the immediate cause of mortality, the ultimate responsibility lies in the rapacity of colonists and their contempt for native tribal civilization. Native Americans have been largely banished from the American psyche except in the high proportion of states, towns, rivers, and so on, which bear indigenous names. For LaDuke, America has for five hundred years been "in the process of denial of holocaust" (Barsamian 4). That this denial continues to this day is shockingly illustrated by the fact that the latest edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, employs research from 1939 to support its assertion that there were hardly more than one million Natives in North America in pre-Columbian times, thereby ignoring more than 60 years of subsequent research that makes absolutely clear that the real figure was at least ten times higher. 'Native American', *Encyclopædia Britannica*. 2004. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. (Accessed 17 Jan 2004).

<sup>5</sup> Concerning the difference between "disease" and "dis-ease" defined from the perspective of medical anthropology, refer to Huang, "Disease,

Empire, and (Alter) Native Medicine in Louise Erdrich's *Tracks* (1988) and Winona LaDuke's *Last Standing Woman* (1998)" (2004).

<sup>6</sup> European colonialists in Americas, despite their general disregard for the indigenous cultures, adopted a number of local medicines, including the use of cinchona as a febrifuge. It is now widely known that Native American herbs have been appropriated by Western scientific medicine to enhance its pharmacology. The most evident fact is that more than two hundred drugs that were used by Native Americans have become official in the *US Pharmacopeia* for varying periods in the first edition of 1820 and in the *National Formulary* since it began in 1888 (Vogel 29). For more details, refer to Vogel, *American Indian Medicine* (1990) and Weatherford, "The Indian Healer" and "The Drug Connection" in *Indian Givers* (1988). Consequently, one aspect of the 'Columbian exchange' between Europe and the Americas was the former's acquisition of many valuable New World medicinal drugs. But while Europe freely pillaged native pharmacies in search of suitable drugs (along with other 'useful' plants and minerals), there was no corresponding incorporation of the cultural ideas and religious practices which had surrounded the use of them in their places of origin (Arnold 1993: 1408).

<sup>7</sup> For further details of this, refer to Richard Grove's *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600–1860* (1995) and Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze's (ed.) *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader* (1997).

<sup>8</sup> For Native American holocaust and genocide, refer to Russell Thornton's *American Indian Holocaust and Survival: A Population History Since 1492* (Civilization of the American Indian, Vol 186) (1990), David Stannard's *The American Holocaust: The Conquest of the New World* (1992), and Ward Churchill's *A Little Matter of Genocide: Holocaust and Denial in the Americas, 1492 to the Present* (1998a) and *Struggle for the Land: Native North American Resistance to Genocide, Ecocide, and Colonization* (2002).

<sup>9</sup> The idea of removing Native people from their lands was originated when Thomas Jefferson brought off the Louisiana Purchase early in the nineteenth century by buying the homelands of several hundred tribes, ironically not from the tribes themselves but from France, for the sum of nineteen million samollas. Jefferson considered it to be degrading if Indians and the whites lived in proximity with each other and thought that the only

remedy was to remove the Indians. Jefferson's idea was carefully drafted into law as the Removal Act, under the stewardship of the Southern white supremacist John C. Calhoun, and was implemented by Andrew Jackson (Allen 11–12). In 1830, as the U.S. Congress passed the "Indian Removal Acts" which gave the federal government power to remove all Native Americans from their lands east of the Mississippi River to territories west of the river, some tribes, especially the Cherokees, refused to leave their homelands. In 1838, U.S. troops began forcibly rounding them up in North Carolina, Tennessee, Alabama and Georgia. During the brutal winter between 1838 and 1839, about 4000 Cherokee died as a result of the removal. The route they traversed and the journey itself became known as "The Trail of Tears" or, as a direct translation from Cherokee, "The Trail Where They Cried" ("Nunna daul Tsuny").

<sup>10</sup> Refer to Huang, the introduction to her "Disease, Empire, and (Alter)Native Medicine" 44–45.

<sup>11</sup> Silko also depicts that the old wing of the El Paso Veterans Hospitals has housed First World War veterans and veterans of the Spanish and Mexican wars who have contracted "tropical fevers" and lung diseases. According to Silko, they supposedly respond to El Paso's dry climate. The Veterans have been sent far for the dry, warm climate and come home as "living dead": "these men had been dead for years—worse then dead to their families" (351).

<sup>12</sup> Tucson is a distinctive locale to identify the diverse cultural intersections in the novel. Silko foregrounds the geographic significance of the city by not merely setting the scene of the story in Tucson but making it the center of a map which appears just before the narrative commences. It is a point of departure and dispersal as well as that of convergence and conflation. It is the cross-road and borderland, a transitional place where "history and geography are trans-figured," to borrow Edward Said's words (317).

<sup>13</sup> This quoted passage mirrors one from a Mayan council book, the *Popol Vuh*: "The rising of Seven Macaw (in mid-October) now marks the coming of the dry season, and his fall to earth and his disappearance (beginning in mid-July) signal the beginning of the hurricane season. It was his first fall, brought on by the blowgun shot of Hunahpu and Xbalanque, that opened the way for the great flood that brought down the wooden people. Just as Seven Macaw only pretended to be the sun and moon, so the wooded people only pretended to be human" (36). In several different occasions, Silko talks of the

Mayan *Popol Vuh* as a referential text for her writing of prophecies in *Almanac* (Silko, "An Expression" 136–37; Coltelli 126–27; Barnes 83). As she says, the almanac of the title "refers to the Mayan almanacs or Mayan codices" (Barnes 83). Almanacs are ancient compilations of Mayas' astrological, agricultural, historical, and other miscellaneous information, through which Mayas understood changes in weather and land so as to ascertain how human beings could live out for a more harmonious and balanced relationship with nature and land. In fact, the earliest books in the Americas were not those written by white colonists but rather these Mayan volumes, among which the *Popol Vuh* was the most famous, telling the Mayan creation myth and consulted regularly by Mayan rulers as part of their decision-making process. Originally written in Mayan hieroglyphs, the *Popol Vuh* was transliterated into Spanish in the sixteenth century. In 1562, however, Diego de Landa, a Catholic missionary, ordered all Mayan books destroyed as the writings of the Devil. Only three Mayan books and fragments of a fourth survive (Weaver, *That the People* 47–48), which are respectively preserved in museums in Dresden, Paris, Madrid, and Mexico City. By writing her novel into an almanac, Silko creates yet another version. Silko imagines the almanac in Yoeme's possession to include a fifth, undiscovered Mayan codex. She uses it not only to document the impacts of 500-year colonialism on Native land and nature but revives and redeems the ancient calendrical fragments to be a sort of testimony for Native traumatic experience. Silko's *Almanac* appeared a year before the quincentennial commemoration of Columbus' arrival in the Americas. Basing her story on Mayan codices, Silko in effect revitalizes the ancient texts which have gone through imperial destruction. Silko's work to redeem ancient culture in her contemporary reinvention is to be viewed as part of continuous efforts to record, transcribe, and preserve Mayan tradition after colonization, aligning with the efforts involved in books such as "the *Popol Vuh*, the Quiché Mayan creation story, and the eighteenth surviving Books of the Chilam Balam, which was written by a class of priests called the Chilam Balam, or 'Jaguar Priest,' who continuously copied, recopied, and expanded their histories from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries" (Anderson 140). Many of the gods mentioned in the *Popol Vuh* creation myth possess names drawn from the Mayan codices. Modeling her work on the *Popol Vuh*, Silko connects the ancient Mayas to the present and the future, which the almanacs foretell.

<sup>14</sup> Yuknavitch suggests that a majority of the characters who emerge in the novel have some connection to Tucson: Leah Blue the real estate tycoon who sees Tucson as Disney World where water can be bought and sold; Trigg who wants to build a U.S. plastic surgery center; Seese who sees Tucson as a territory for drug smuggling activities; Lecha, the talk show psychic whose duty is to transcribe the notebooks and read the signs of the land, looks to Tucson as a territory one might read like geographic Braille (109).

<sup>15</sup> While Silko connects the ancient Mayas, through the fragments of almanacs that reside with some of her Yaqui characters, to the tribal present and future, which the Mayan almanac foretells, her version of an almanac becomes a prophecy as much as the Mayan codices. Like Wovoka's message in the Ghost Dance depicted in *Gardens* that "a spirit army rising up" (362), *Almanac* predicts specifically a revolution beginning in Chiapas moving from south to north to reclaim Native lands. This imagined revolt became an actual revolution which took place on January 1, 1994, when the Zapatista National Liberation Army (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional), the EZLN, declared war on the government of Mexico. Indigenous and peasant armies in Chiapas revolted against the dictating Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) that had dominated Mexico for the past sixty-five years. This in effect astonishes the world as to how the warning from a Native American author would eventually be realized in actuality. For details, refer to Silko ("Notes"), Horvitz (1998) and Anderson (2001).

<sup>16</sup> For details concerning the imperial project in the mining of uranium and other poisonous chemicals, refer to Tarter's "Locating the Uranium Mine" (2002) and Huang "Hiroshima Trauma" (2002)

<sup>17</sup> The Cold War refers to the power struggle between the Western powers/the U.S. and the Communist bloc/the Soviet Union that began at the end of World War II. Above ground atomic testing in Nevada then took place from January 27 of 1951 through July 11 of 1962. Terry Tempest Williams sarcastically comments, "Not only were the winds blowing north, covering 'low use segments of the population' with fallout and leaving sheep dead in their tracks, but the climate was right. The United States of 1950s . . . the Cold War was hot" (357-58).

<sup>18</sup> This paradigmatic shift took place as what Bruno Latour considers to be a "modern project." In reflecting over post-seventeenth-century scientific



rationality, Latour in his book *We Have Never Been Modern* (1993) states that the project of modernity is made possible by dividing humans from nonhumans (culture/nature), which then enables another divide, the West and the Rest (Us and Them). To illustrate, one crucial part of modern practice is purification that creates “two entirely distinct ontological zones: that of human beings on the one hand; that of nonhumans on the other” (10–11). The practice of purification meticulously separates nature from culture, nonhumans from humans, the objective from the subjective, and pure natural forces from political forces. According to Latour, the asymmetry between nature and culture then becomes an asymmetry between past and present, as the past was the confusion of things and men while the present or future no longer confuses them (71). This is then the division between the modern and the pre-modern. While modernity is a Western enterprise, the Rest, the Native in particular, is assigned to a position of the pre-modern, the vanishing and the dead. A similar critique of Western modernity has been made by post-modernists as well. Jean-François Lyotard in his *Postmodern Condition* (1979), for instance, argues against the legitimating “grands récits,” “master narratives,” and regards the Enlightenment project as having produced a wide range of human disasters: from modern warfare, Auschwitz, and the Gulag to nuclear threat and severe ecological crisis (xxiv).

<sup>19</sup> In addition to the mining of gold/silver and toxic chemicals on reservation, *Gardens* also relates the tribal catastrophe to the whites’ dam construction projects. The novel narrates how after the river’s course is diverted, Sister Salt becomes so much saddened to “find silver-green carp belly-up, trapped in water holes in the empty riverbed”: “She trie[s] to care for the datura plants and wild purple asters on the riverbank suddenly left high and dry. She call[s] them her flower garden, but the asters [die] and the datura [wilt] if she [does] not carry them buckets of water every day” (*Gardens* 212). Sister Salt’s futile effort to sustain the lives of the river bed in juxtaposition with the environmental casualties caused by the digging of channel and diverting of the river create a vivid contrast of two different value systems. As Kohler claims, “[t]he Indian respect for the land and all its life forms is sharply contrasted with modern turn-of-the-century American society’s ambitions to conquer nature for purposes of modernization and urbanization” (239). Linda Hogan too singles out dam construction as the central ecological problem that the narrative of *Solar Storms* pivots around: “the caribou and geese were affected, as well as the

healing plants the people needed” (58). Likewise, Silko’s *Gardens* portrays dam construction as catastrophe (212; 433), representing yet another destructive act against Native lands.

<sup>20</sup> In addition to the commercialization of tribal medicine, Silko in her novel furthermore critiques the commodification of the body, especially in the biomaterial business (“blood and biomaterials industry of mass murder” [445]) and human organ transplantation. Trigg, for instance, is enthusiastic about the profits he can make in the blood plasma and illegal organ transplantation. For Trigg the “donors” are merely “human debris. Human refuse. Only a few had organs of sufficient quality for transplant use” (444). Trigg understands that it is not therapeutic drugs any more, but biomaterials (“the industry’s ‘preferred’ term for fetal-brain material, human kidneys, hearts and lungs, corneas for eye transplants, and human skin for burn victims”) that will “be the bonanza of the twenty-first century” (398). With “the price quotes for fresh whole blood, human corneas, and cadaver skin” buzzing in his head, Trigg aims at working his connections with “human organ transplant research teams at the university hospital” (389). Trigg plans for Tucson to become an international center for research, organ transplants, and cosmetic surgery (“when the fat came off or was sucked out, yards and yards of sagging wattles and crepey skin remained to be snipped off or tucked” [663]). As Ann Stanford points out, the biomedical gaze of Western medical technology “fosters a view of the person as a disembodied entity” (31). It is precisely this orientation to the human body, viewing body (parts) as marketable and human beings as commodities, that characterizes the “diseased” enterprise of Western medicine in *Almanac*. As Stanford further avers, this perspective “exacerbates the objectification of the human body that already exists in biomedicine and sharpens the separation of the spiritual, social, and mindful body from the physiological being” (31). Stanford also criticizes that with the specter of ethnic cleansing hovering over the world and with the paranoid policing of borders in the U.S. and elsewhere, the commerce in human bodies has a menacing pragmatism—getting rid of certain (radically unstable) categories of people, so-called undesirables (the anthropoemic function), and, in so doing, creating the means to save those worth saving (with organ transplantation fulfilling the anthropophagic function) (Stanford 31–32). For further details concerning border or transnational trading of human bodies (body parts), see Nancy Scheper-Hughes, *The Global Traffic*

in *Human Organs* (*Current Anthropology* 41.2 (April 2000), which maps a late-20<sup>th</sup>-century global trade in bodies and body parts.

<sup>21</sup> For details concerning Quetzalcoatl, refer to Karl Taube's *The Legendary Past: Aztec and Maya Myths* (1993). Serpents are important archetypal gods (goddesses) in Mesoamerican cultures, identified with earth and fertility. In her renowned Chicana classic *Borderlands* (1987/1999), Gloria Anzaldúa, for instance, devotes two of the essay chapters exclusively to transparent accounts of snake deities. Reclaiming and reinventing these deities, in particular, Coatlicue, Anzaldúa develops the now well-known concept of Chicana "new mestiza." For details, read Anzaldúa (1987/1999), 47–74.

<sup>22</sup> Refer to footnote 14.

<sup>23</sup> Part of my commentary on Ghost Dance in *Gardens* has been presented in a paper titled "Representing the Unspeakable: (Alter)Native Medicine in Linda Hogan's *Power* (1998) and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Gardens in the Dunes* (1999) in the 11th National Conference of the English and American Literature Association of the ROC, March 12–13, at National Kaohsiung University, Kaohsiung, Taiwan.

<sup>24</sup> The Ghost Dance ritual that swept across Native tribes in the late nineteenth century began with the mystical vision of Wovoka, a Paiute Christian. The ritual predicted Christ would come back to earth to wipe Euramericans off the Americas. Dead spirits would be raised to life, the buffalo would return, and all creation would be renewed. This ritual, according to Jace Weaver, had direct antecedents in the 1870 Ghost Dance, the Prophet Dance of Smohalla, and Bini's movement in Canada in the 1830's. The whites' fear of this tribal ritual as a locus of political resistance led to the famous Wounded Knee Massacre in 1890. The Ghost Dance was, therefore, banned since that time but was revived in the 1970's by Henry Crow Dog and Leonard Crow Dog (Weaver, "Triangulated Power" 277).

<sup>25</sup> Gerald Vizenor, 1992, "Native American Indian Literature: Critical Metaphors of the Ghost Dance," *World Literature Today* 66.2.

<sup>26</sup> This is the opening passage of the modern version of Hippocratic Oath. Hippocrates was a physician born in 406 BC on the island of Cosica, Greece, who became known as the "Father of Western Medicine." His medical practice based on observations and the study of the human body affirmed that the body must be treated as a whole, rather than a series of parts. Later he developed his

thoughts into an Oath of Medical Ethics for physicians to follow, which is taken by doctors today as they enter their profession. Hippocratic Oath was modified by Louis Lasagna in 1964 into a modern version and is used extensively in many Western medical schools today.

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