
Memory and Future Generations: An Ecofeminist Study of Joy Harjo's Poetry

Keywords: ecofeminism, Joy Harjo, Harjo's tribal memory.

Alyamama Qais Yousef

Asst.Prof. Nahidh Falih Sulaiman (Ph.D.)

University of Diyala/College of Education for Humanities

yamama.alqaisy@gmail.com

nahidhum@gmail.com

Abstract

Native people in American society face currently significant challenges in proving their Native identity. Researches have shown that the Native cultural identity has been influenced by the western colonization and their strategies of obliterating Native people's history and cultural heritage. This research aims at studying the role of memory in the construction of home, restoring balance, and preserving the Native cultural identity. The study presents Joy Harjo, a Native American poet, who tries to discover the ecofeminist perspectives which was found in Native tribal lifestyle. Harjo finds in tribal memory the power to defy the oppression of the patriarchal system against Native American people in the contemporary society

1. Introduction

Joy Harjo is a Native American poet, musician and artist, professor in creative writing programs and activist. Recently, she has been acclaimed as US poet Laureate on 19 May 2019. She is the 23rd poet laureate and the first Native American poet to hold this honorable position (Charles). Harjo considers this position would help her to be a representative of Native culture. Harjo makes a great contribution in reviving Native traditions and cultural identity through offering an awareness of Native history, myths, and tribal philosophies that reflect the ecofeminist thought. Through her return to Native tribal memory, Harjo defies the Western time linear and her poetry views time as a spiral that connects the past, the present, and the future together and transforms tribal traditions and culture into the present and future generations. In many of her poetic volumes specifically *In Mad Love and War* (1990), *The Woman Who Fell from the Sky* (1994), and *A Map to the Next World* (2000), Harjo demonstrates that the ecofeminist principles which are founded in tribal lifestyle represent the power of memory in maintaining the Native cultural identity. Her cyclical memory defies the Western concept of time linear that admits the present only.

Harjo's poetry relies on personal and cultural memory especially those of her Creek tribe traditions and spirituality. The importance of memory here is manifested in the resistance against the colonization of the Western culture that restricted the continuation of Native cultural identity.

2. Ecofeminism: Emergence and Development

Ecofeminism, a branch of ecocriticism. It has attracted the attention of many scholars and writers because it encompasses nature and gender together. Many literary works are attributed to Ecofeminism especially by women who write about the issues of the oppression of women and nature. The definite relation between Feminism and environment is described by many writers and ecofeminists in the United States such as: Rosemary Radford, Carolyn Merchant, Karen J. Warren, Susana Giffirin, and Gloria Feman Orenstein. So, ecofeminism is the combination of feminism and environmental concerns.

When ecofeminism is examined as a term, a question will be raised that what sort of connection between nature and women? In her book *New Women, New Earth* (1975) Rosemary Radford Ruether notes, "women must see that there can be no liberation for them and no solution to the ecological crisis...They must unite the demands of women's movement with those of the ecological movement to envision a radical reshaping of the basic socioeconomic relations and the underlying values of this society" (qtd. in Warren xiii). In Ruether's view, both feminism and ecology are closely linked in their aim to break up the power of dominating system. So, ecofeminism is the combination of feminism and ecology and their issues are related to the conservation of nature, women, and the non-living world. In *Literature, Nature, and Other: Ecofeminist Critique* (1990), Patrick D. Murphy shows that ecology and feminism put the groundings for a new theory:

Ecology as a discipline means, fundamentally, the study of the environment in its interanimating relationships, its change and conservation, with humanity recognized as a

part of the planetary ecosystem. Ecology ,then, is not the study of “external” environment which we enter, or a management of the system for the raw materials at our command, although some misperceive it these ways; it is the study of interrelationship, place, function with its bedrock the recognition of the distinction between things - in- themselves and for us.(4)

Murphy makes it clearer that the function of ecology teaches how to live in a particular place and time appropriately as Adrienne Rich expresses “I need to understand how a place on the map is also a place in history” (Rich 4). In this context, Mary Mellor in her introduction to *Feminism an Ecology* (1997) remarks that Ecofeminism grew in the mid-1970s coincided with the second wave feminism and the green movement. Ecofeminism shares the feminists’ perspectives of humans as gendered in manners that subordinate, abuse and mistreat women, and the green movements’ views that human’s activities are responsible for the destruction of nature (Mellor 1).

The term ecofeminism first coined by the French feminist Francoise D’Eaubonne in 1974 in her book “*Le Feminisme ou la mort*” *Feminism or Death*. D’Eaubonne addresses women’s potentials for realizing an ecological revolution to guarantee human survival on the planet. This book is considered to be an ecological revolution that intends to rebuild a new relationship between men and women, and also between human and nature. Ecofeminism developed in the United States by Ynestra King at the Institute for Social Ecology in Vermont around 1976. The concept turned into a movement in 1980 after the conference on *Women and Life on Earth: Ecofeminism in the 1980s*, and the following Women’s Pentagon Action to dissent hostile to atomic war and weapons development. During the 1980s, social women’s activists in the United States infused new life into ecofeminism by contending that the two women and nature could be freed together (Merchant 194).

Gloria Feman Orenstein and Iren Diamond in their introduction to *Reweaving the World: the Emergence of Ecofeminism* (1990) state that Ecofeminism is “ a term that some use to describe both the diverse range of women’s efforts to save the earth and the transformation of feminism in the West that have resulted from the new view of women and nature” (ix). Feminists contended the social constructions that approve male predominance and privilege over women. They affirmed that women should be equivalent members and take part in forming culture. Ultimately, feminists come to identify the connection of women and nature emphasizing the necessity of serving nature in order to achieve women’s freedom. Karen J. Warren, in her introduction to *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature* (1997) declares that “ecological feminism is the position that there are important connections between how one treats women, people of color, and the underclass on one hand and how one treats the nonhuman natural environment on the other” (xi). Mary Mellor defines Ecofeminism as “a movement that sees a connection between the exploitation and degradation of the natural world and the subordination and oppression of women” (1). Accordingly, by these definitions ecofeminism is the result of the combination of feminism and environmentalism. Its essential point is to end all types of domination and oppression and to perceive the connectedness and association that people share with nature.

In *Reweaving the World, Ecofeminism: Our Roots and Flowering* (1990), Charlene Spretnak explains the feminist roots of ecofeminism and how women are drawn to ecofeminism by stating that:

Ecofeminism grew out of radical, or cultural, feminism (rather than from liberal feminism or socialist feminism), which holds that identifying the dynamics – largely fear and resentment – behind the dominance of male over female is the key to comprehending every expression of patriarchal culture with its hierarchal, militaristic, mechanistic, industrial forms. The first tendrils of ecofeminism appeared not in the exuberant season of

Earth Day 1970 – for feminists were quite preoccupied with the birthing of our movement then – but in mid-decade. (5)

In her book, *Ecofeminism Women, Animals, Nature*(1993), Greta Garrd explains that Ecofeminism as a theory has developed from different fields of “feminist inquiry and activism such as peace movements, labor movements, women’s health care, the anti-nuclear, environmental, and animal liberation movements”(Garrd1). Ecofeminism is based on the belief that nature is oppressed by the same ideology of practicing oppression on the basis of race, gender, class, sexuality, and species. This ideology is described by Ecofeminists as patriarchy. The self-other difference is based on separation while the sense of self in Ecofeminism relies on the interconnectedness between all living and non-living beings on earth. So, the main goal of Ecofeminism is to stand against all kinds of oppression practiced by the patriarchal system (Garrd 2).

Yenstra King identifies the main principles of Ecofeminism not deal with the domination of women and nature. She notes that ecofeminists adopt life struggles of the whole nature as their own issue. The construction of Western industrial civilization, as opposed to nature, confirms the oppression of women since women are close to nature. Ecofeminists take action against the hierarchical system that justifies human domination over other species believing that life on earth should be an interconnected web, not a hierarchy. As a movement, Ecofeminism encourages diversity by opposing all kinds of oppression and violence against human and other species believing that diversity is needed to maintain a healthy balanced ecosystem that incorporates human and nonhuman. The survival of species can be achieved by rejecting nature-culture dualism and following feminist and ecological principles that provide a new understanding of human’s relationship with nature and the nonhuman world (qtd. in Gaard and Murphy 3-4). Ecofeminists also recommend some ethics to deal with the domination of women and nature. Carolyn Merchant suggests an ethic that treats humans as equal in regardless to

sex, gender and class. Men and women must be equal in all social, political and personal domains. Moreover, humans should be an equal partner with nonhuman nature by granting nature space to develop and reproduce itself in order to fulfil humans' needs (Merchant 196).

In literature, American women writers, especially women of color, take literature as a means of expressing their ecofeminist views and raising their voice against different kinds of oppression. Mostly, many writers from different backgrounds are attracted to poetry from early time. The first who used environmental issues in her poems is Aemilia Lanyer who started her writing in the seventeenth century. She is recognized as an ecofeminist writer since she feminizes nature in her poetry considering it as an ideal place for escaping from the mainstreams of any society that persecute women. In Contemporary poetry, women writers of color adopted ecofeminism to address issues of race, gender, political issues, and other environmental concerns. They portrayed nature as a peaceful escape from the violence and oppression of the patriarchal system. Contemporary ecofeminist poetry focuses on the connectedness of humans and nature. Thus, nature becomes not only a means of escaping for women but also as an empowerment for all minorities to stand against racism, sexism, and environmental destruction as well (Daily10). Maya Angelou is a black ecofeminist poet and activist. She utilizes her poetry in the issues of sexual abuse and racism that black women experienced in the United States. Her poem "Still I Rise" is a significant ecofeminist poem in which she compares women to elements of nature like sun, moon, dust and air to emphasize the power of women of color in facing the oppression of the patriarchal society (Daily 48). Moreover, Linda Hogan, a Native American woman poet and an ecofeminist, depicts nature in her poetry as home and sanctuary from the patriarchal oppression and sexual violence against women. She repeatedly uses animals symbolism for women to show the way women interact with the natural elements and how women and nature are feminized (Daily 37).

In America, the environmental crisis began with the colonization of the new land when European settlers imposed their control through the exploitation of Native land and people. It is also the result of scientific revolution and capitalism. Carolyn Merchant asserts that “radical ecology as a response to a growing sense of crisis in the industrialized world, it acts on a new perception that domination of nature entails the domination of human beings along with the lines of race, class, and gender” (Merchant 1). As indicated by Merchant, this control of mechanical world has been advanced by capitalism, which evacuated the model of nature as a living creature: “It entailed an ethic of the control and domination of nature and supplanted the organic world’s I - thou ethic of reciprocity between humans and nature. Mechanism and its ethic of domination legitimates the use of nature as commodity, a central tenant of industrial capitalism” (11).

In spite of the expanding of the patriarchal views that categorized earth with feminine, many cultures still have a special reverence for the earth as a mother and the cause of our existence. Ecofeminism discovers the history of colonization over the United States that expanded by the destruction of the Indian lands and exploiting their natural resources for the benefit of western colonizers. In her book *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide* (2005), Andrea Smith explains:

Native peoples have become marked as inherently violable through a process of sexual colonization. By extension, their lands and territories have become marked as violable as well. The connection between the colonization of Native people's bodies particularly Native women's bodies and Native lands is not simply metaphorical. (55)

This explanation suggests that Native American issue can be categorized within an ecofeminist perspective since the oppression against them is an environment, race, and gender. Greta Gaard explains that Ecofeminism and Native American societies share numerous qualities for all intents and purposes

and that ecofeminist theory in the United States has been explained largely from a white women's activist perspective. Native American women have not expected to fabricate ecofeminist theory since their own particular societies furnished them with an abundant comprehension of the interconnectedness and association of people and nature (295).

Native American culture represents the perfect example of ecofeminist thought because indigenous people live in interaction with nature in regardless to the differences between men and women, and they respect the right of all creatures living on earth. Native Americans believe in the unity of all human and nonhuman species. For them, nonhuman is a part of this universe. Not at all like patriarchal frameworks, Indians are matriarchal and shared living in harmony with all other nature. For this reason, Native American people were considered as inferior to western culture in time when European colonizers tried to impose the hierarchy system on their culture.

3. Joy Harjo's Tribal Memory

The poetic voice of Joy Harjo expresses a nostalgia for the tribal memory and the history of indigenous people. She always has a desire to return to times that preceded the age of discovery by the European settlers. Harjo's poetic voice shows the influence of ancient tribal memory on the present and future generations. Through memory, Harjo goes back to the tribal world which represents an ecofeminist consciousness in time when people were not separated from the natural world. Harjo focuses on the concept of time nonlinearity that breaks the gap between the past, present, and future, and creates a cyclical motion of time in which human, natural world, past, and present are interconnected. In Harjo's returning to memory, Scott J. Bryson notes that "Harjo seeks to diminish barriers mental, physical, temporal that separate humans from each other and from the natural world, to return to a non- or less-dualistic world" (60). Harjo earns to be in a world which was not governed by the hierarchal system of the patriarchal society that marks Native American

people as downs, a minority who live as a marginalized group. Harjo, however, seeks returning to Paula Gunn Allen's description of the world as to be "the essential harmony of all things and see all things as being of equal value in the scheme of things, denying the opposition, dualism, and isolation that characterize non-Indian thought" (56).

Harjo's returning to the past is manifested in the remembrance of old stories and myths of her Muskogee Creek nation and brings them into the present. In "Heartshed", a poem from *In Mad Love and War* (1990), Harjo describes the process of her remembrance, she writes:

You keep coming back, the one who knows
 the sound they call
 "in the beginning."
 It doesn't mean going backward.
 Our bones are built of spirals.
 The sun circling.
 Ravens hang the walls
 calling memory.(6-12)

The poem emphasizes the close connection between the past and future. The image of "the sun circling" refers to the long journey of the Native people who suffered different kinds of oppression. There is a clear call for them to believe in the sunrise as a symbol for the future. The reference of black birds is not associated with evil as various cultures believed. Here, ravens represent the old traditions of Native American memory that paved the way for the future. Harjo intends to keep Native American traditions alive to remind people that "one has no authentic voice without memory; and without an authentic voice, one is speechless, hardly human, and unable to survive for very long" (qtd. in Lang 49). Without their tribal heritage, Native people would have no voice to prove their existence as the indigenous people of America. Scott J. Bryson explains the meaning of Harjo's return, suggests that in "going

backward, Harjo acknowledges, is impossible; doing so would be akin to overcoming exile... Going back, in contrast, means recuperating and maintaining an awareness of the past while allowing it to translate itself into present and future wisdom and insight” (57). Therefore, going backward might be like fleeing from an exile to another exile where one stands in the past and does not look forward. While, on the other hand, going back means making an awareness of the past for the realization of the present and future. Harjo expresses the act of returning as spirals “Out bones are built of spirals”. The spiral is a recurrent symbol in Harjo’s poems, indicating her return to the past of her Muscogee world. In a recent interview published by Shenandoah Magazine, Harjo explains, “Memory is a living being that moves in many-layered streams. It is not static. It is not a backwards look. It moves forward, sideways, and in a spiral” (Harjo, *Memory a Living Being*). Laura Coltelli also refers to the spirals in Harjo’s poetry explaining, “the spinning movement of the vortex ... spirals down the tip while simultaneously expanding toward the future” (Coltelli, *Spiral* 9). In this context, Harjo’s returning back to the past means a step towards the future. This spiral movement of Harjo’s memory represents the Indian view of time nonlinearity that opposes to what Harjo refers “a contemporary, industrial-age-Euro-American sense of space and time in which there is only the present... There is no future or past when it comes right down to what I need and want right now” (Harjo, *Weaving* 128). Through the image of going back, Harjo focuses on the Native moral values and traditions that people should consider after years. To her the past is rich enough to support the present with cultural protection. Such protection is not to revive the past, but to design the future as well.

Harjo’s adherence to Indian tribal memory is an evident in many of her poems especially in her collections *In Mad Love and War* (1990), *The Woman who Fell from the Sky* (1994) and *A Map to the Next World* (2000), in which Harjo dramatizes ancient myths and narratives of oral tradition to real situations

from the contemporary society. So, in this imaginative return, Harjo seeks the reclamation of the indigenous culture which has been replaced by the Euro-American culture and language with five centuries of western colonialism. Harjo does not acknowledge the culture of the United States as a true culture; she thinks that “Beliefs, social institutions, arts, and traditions” are what constitute a nation’s culture (Harjo and Winder 52). The United States culture is not original. It is as an “over culture” as they do not have a history or ancestors (Harjo and Winder 52). In the last interview, Harjo emphasizes the importance of memory to reclaim Indian history that has been disappeared or repressed from the history of America, she says: “with memory, rather, the memory-field, nothing is ever lost. But here in the “over-culture,” which is a culture of commercialization, we are taught to live in the now only... Memory is our storehouse. Poetry is one way to access memory, to hold memory” (Harjo, *Memory a Living Being*). Retrieving Indian history is a part of decolonization process to reclaim the stolen culture and traditions. Indian strength as a nation lies in the culture of ancestral knowledge.

Music is an integral part of Harjo’s memory. It plays a key role in linking her imagination to the past and inspiring her with images from the landscapes of her ancestors’ tribal life. Such memory empowers Harjo’s resistance and enables her to prove her tribal cultural identity and to integrate Western culture rather than to assimilate or stand against Western culture. In the introduction to *How We Become Human, New and Selected poems: 1975-2001*(2002), Harjo argues that “poetry and music have been together since the invention of poetry and music. They are soul mates, not meant to be parted” (xxv). For example, she finds in saxophone voice a reflection of human feelings and experiences. In her prose poem “Original Memory”, from *In Mad Love and War* (1990), Harjo emphasizes the role of music to remember the past events:

Last night, I played saxophone duets with a friend. This was not in the Muscogee world (though as elements interplay throughout the

evening, I am never far away). We are both heartbroken, mourning lovers who disappeared some time ago into old calendar pages. But the events are perfected as we make music, and here is Doubt again, making ready for another leap into the world, to re-create itself again. (*In Mad* 47)

In playing saxophone, the music enables Harjo to be in contact with her ancestors who have lost their history and their memory and turned to be just numbers on the calendar's record. Yet, music makes the events so close and enables her to retrieve the lost memory of her ancestors. It creates a continuous connection with the past and fills the gap between the past and the present. Thus, music overcomes the Western notion of time linear which excludes the past in an attempt to obliterate the Indian heritage and culture and to confirm the present that proves their dominance. Donelle Dreese notes that "In her poetic passages, music is a transformer that reshapes linear time into a cycle where the space between past and present folds and provides access to events and ancestors from another time" (Dreese 42). Since music motivates memory and creates a connection with the past, indigenous people can overcome many troubles such as the spiritual and physical alienation they experienced when they have been displaced from their Native lands, traditions and culture. Harjo continues the poem with emphasizing the traditions of her Muskogee tribe:

When I am inside the Muscogee world, which is not a flip side of the Western time chain but a form of music staggered in the ongoing event of earth calisthenics, the past and the future are the same tug-of-war. (47)

Vividly, adopting ancestral memories into her poetry, Harjo contends the Patriarchal Western thoughts that divide modern culture from traditions. For her, memories are the consolation she escapes through from the alienation in

contemporary society. She compares her tribal world to the modern western world. Harjo refuses the time linear of western culture and considers the world of her tribe as piece of music that continue with the earth's movement to bridge the past and the future. The poem also emphasizes the power of tribal memory, Harjo writes:

In the Muscogee world, one would have a circle
of relatives (everyone is ultimately a relative)
recalling similar events, to establish connection,
and to convey the event lovingly into a past. (48)

In an interview with David King Dunaway and Sara L. Spurgeon, Harjo explains that "time linear establish hierarchy". For her, this concept "emphasizes a past, present and future, so that you are always proceeding towards something, whereas what I would call spiral time, mythic time, tribal time, is process, as opposed to progress" (59). Harjo hopes to be in contact with the tribal past. Regardless of the time linear, she believes that the love she feels when being in connection with her cultural heritage can affect the self-alienation she experiences in the present.

In Harjo's poetry, the interval between the past and the present is cancelled by linking the cultural memory with the present. She conveys the stories that are related to people's existence and the myths of creation to the natural landscape of the contemporary society (Dreese 38). In "Deer Dancer", a prose poem from *In Mad Love and War* (1990), Harjo blends the spiritual and the material world by having a mythic woman who appears and dances in the bar:

Nearly everyone had left that bar in the middle of
winter except the hardcore. It was the coldest
night of the year, every place shut down, but not
us. Of course we noticed when she came in. We
were Indian ruins. She was the end of beauty. (5)

The speaker refers to herself and other Native people who dwell the bar as “Indian ruins” because of their sense of loss and disappointment in modern society. Drinking alcohol and listening to music are to escape their deplorable reality. To overcome this situation, Harjo returns to the past in order to create a vital connection with the Indian heritage. The mythical woman who appears and dances in front of them is blessed. She symbolizes the power and beauty that are necessary to help them to continue in the modern world as Native people who try to maintain their own history and national identity. Throughout the poem, Harjo refers to the deer woman’s real identity:

No one knew her, the stranger whose tribe we
recognized, her family related to deer, if that's
who she was, a people accustomed to hearing
songs in pine trees, and making the hearts. (5)

Harjo believes that this woman has descended from deer family. Her belief is related to an old myth from the southwest oral traditions in which a hunter went away to the deer’s world and has transformed into a deer by dressing a deer’s skin and antlers, his tribe and family could not get him back into human world (Womack 229). Based on this myth, Harjo predicts that this woman is belonged to a deer’s family. The title of the poem is marked to the ancient ceremonial dance called Deer Dance. The Indigenous people were performed with songs and music in ceremonies called *Pahko*. The man who learned this ceremony known as *Yoleme*, which means “wilderness person”, took this tradition in secret from a deer father then he transformed it to his children. The *Yoleme* used this ceremony as a kind of spiritual connection with the deer to ask for its forgiveness before hunting (Crawford and Kelly 1165). This indicates the fact that the indigenous people of America had a spiritual connection with the natural world and they respected all other nonhuman creatures. The Indigenous people were performed this ceremony to honor the deer for providing its livelihood to keep them alive. The Deer Dancer in the bar represents old traditions that Harjo recalls to maintain Native culture:

She was the myth slipped down through dreamtime. The promise of feast we all knew was coming. The deer who crossed through knots of a curse to find us. She was no slouch, and neither were we, watching. The music ended. And so does the story. I wasn't there. But I imagined her like this, not a stained red dress with tape on her heels but the deer who entered our dream in white dawn, breathed mist into pine trees, her fawn a blessing of meat, the ancestors who never left. (6)

The mythical deer woman becomes a symbol of beauty, life, and peace. Her appearance reflects the way in which the indigenous people lived in the past before colonialism. The image of the "Indian ruins" is transformed from lost people in the darkness of bar to the ancient landscape where their ancestors lived. The landscape of the past reflects the light of dawn which gives hope and renewal; it is a forest of calmness and peace where Indigenous people lived in comfort, unafraid, and not hungry.

The image of the deer represents life and challenging in facing any difficulty. According to a statement made by Craig S. Womack, the deer is of great importance in Native American life before their contact with the western settlers. It was an essential source of food. Then after the contact, the deer was the reason behind their existence. The Indians, in particular the Creek tribe from which Harjo descended, were able to survive through the trade of deer. For this reason, Harjo describes the deer dancer's fawn as "a blessing of meat", which indicates the historical importance of the deer to the Creek nation as the source of their sustenance (229). Furthermore, the appearance of the deer inside the bar of the modern city shows the importance of adhering to the traditions of the past as a way to survive in modern society. The deer symbolizes the power and ability to cope with the changes and the surviving in contemporary society:

The woman inside the woman who was to dance
naked in the bar of misfits blew deer magic.
Henry Jack, who could not survive a sober day,

thought she was Buffalo Calf Woman come back .
. . Now that's a miracle. Some people see vision
in a burned tortilla, some in the face of a woman.
(5)

Harjo tries to escape five centuries of suffering and violence under colonial domination by returning to the memory of her Indian ancestors. She returns the world of the deer to the tribal life where there was no colonialism in that the affiliation between the natural world and the human society was achieved perfectly. This reflects an ambition to revive the Indian traditions in contemporary society. Harjo takes an important step to create a world based on tribal traditions and culture. By transforming time and place, Harjo's cultural memory gives indigenous people the identity they have lost in the contemporary society, as Donelle Dreese interprets: "Harjo is able to juxtapose cosmic and mythic aspects of her culture with mundane objects of the present world, creating an atmosphere that finds the spirituality in both" (38). Harjo's return to ancestors' memory expresses a postcolonial poetic voice that keeps strongly a continuous connection with the indigenous culture. The deer woman takes back those "Indian ruins" to the spiritual world of their indigenous heritage of their ancestors (Dreese 40).

A large part of Harjo's memory is reflected in storytelling tradition. She says: "the older stories are like shadows dancing right behind" (Bruchac 91). Harjo shows the influence of ancient myths of Indian memory on the lives of contemporary Native people. In an interview with Donelle R. Ruwe, Harjo explains, "I believe myth is an alive, interactive event that is present in the everyday...I understand myth to be at the root of all event. It's the shimmering framework for all else to occur" (Weaving 130). Through memory, Harjo creates a kind of surrealistic existence that combines ancient landscapes from the tribal world with the present time. She adopts the Indian beliefs that reflect the ideas of transformation and transcendence into another time and place. Donelle Dreese explains, "Harjo is able to juxtapose cosmic and mythic aspects of her

culture with mundane objects of the present world creating an atmosphere that finds the spirituality in both” (38). In his article “Closing the Distance between Personal and Mythic Space”, Jim Rupert shows that Harjo uses myths because she finds “perception of that fusion between land, person and the mythic space can be encouraged by historical insight, a vision of continuance or connectedness of all beings through spirit” (27). Rupert adds that the awareness of this connectedness is obliterated in the contemporary society. Thus, Harjo finds it is necessary for the poet to return to the mythic world to transform the historical vision into the present. Here, Harjo focuses on this fusion as a result of the combination between the past and memory. Thus, the focus is on the spiritual sources of identity which were rooted in the past. Through memory and myths, she can promote the definite result of maintaining culture and identity.

Harjo’s returning through memory does not mean that she stops in the present and looks back at the past. It is more appropriate to say that she stands in the past to look forward to the future from an indigenous tribal perspective. In an interview with Laura Coltelli, Harjo obviously says: “I also see memory as not just associated with past history, past events, past stories, but nonlinear, as in future and ongoing history, events and stories” (*Winged Words* 57). Harjo and Coltelli used the spiral as a metaphor to describe the process of Harjo’s memory and the cyclical movement of time and events in her poetry. Additionally, Angelique V. Nixon uses “a double helix” as a metaphor to describe Harjo’s poems in her collections of poems and tales *A Map to the Next World*, (2000). Nixon describes Harjo’s poetry as “multidimensional and nonlinear...complex interplay and interchange” (172). The double helix exhibits the way Harjo’s poems move towards the future while admitting the past and the present.

In “Returning from the Enemy”, Harjo addresses her generation to recreate the past as the power to meet the future:

It is time to begin. I know it and have dreaded the knot of memory as it unwinds in my gut. Behind me river is steady and laps the jetty. Winds purr through the grass. The wake of history is a dragline behind me. I am linked to my father, my son, and my daughter. We are relatives of deep water...I carry fire in my hands to the edge of the water. And continue to believe we will make it through the bloodstream to the ceremony for returning from the enemy. (69)

Harjo asserts the necessity to maintain tribal memory from being vanished by transforming their culture into the present and the future. By invoking tribal memory and Native heritage, Harjo and her generation become the protectors of history and Native culture. The past is associated with the river; this running river represents the continuation and moving forward. To avoid losing their past that forms their being, they must embrace it and preserve their stories and traditions from one generation to another. The relationship between the past and the present is depicted as a kind of familial kin. Her father represents the past. She is the present and her son and daughter will definitely be the future. They are all connected and complete each other. She imbibed stories from her father and she transformed them to her kids. So, they will all be able to keep the stories alive for the future. For Harjo, memory is an “active thing and kind of twists through present, past, and future...Your spirit can travel back or forwards, depending and connect because it’s there and part of you ...I believe that history contracts and expands” (Harjo and Winder 11-12). This cyclical remembrance is a resistance to the enemy who wants to erase Native history:

The enemy made a circle of piss to claim us. He cut everything down to make his cities and factories and burned the forest to plant his fields. The wound so deep it can be seen far above this blue green planet, far above us. You cannot destroy a soul though you may destroy a planet.

You cannot destroy a song though you can make a people forgetful. A soul can appear to be destroyed, and a song can disappear for a few generations only to reemerge from the heart of a child who turns and becomes a woman. (69)

Harjo believes that memory is a powerful weapon to meet the “enemy”. In this poem, she raises as a warrior to defend tribal memory and keep stories alive (Hanna 16). She fights the Western colonizers to reclaim her culture which they took through replacing wildness by technology: “I’ve been especially involved in the struggles of Indian peoples to maintain a place and culture in this precarious age. My poetry has everything to do with this” (Smith and Allen 24). Harjo addresses the enemy who tries to erase the history of her nation, with a resistant poetic language that emphasizes the power of Indian memory as Harjo states “I come from a people who are taught to forget nothing I believe that every thought, every word, every song or horse that existed makes a mural of existence that gives form to this one we find ourselves in” (qtd. in Bryson 55). The poem suggests an end to the silence through the association of their history with a song that might be disappeared for a while, but it will be recited again by future generation. In celebrating the tribal memory, Harjo returns from the enemy as a victorious warrior who defended the land through keeping its memory.

In the poem that holds the collection’s title, “A Map to the Next World”, Harjo takes a serious step towards the future. She moves to a new century by creating a map to a new world in which she asserts the importance of Native history and identity for the future generation to continue:

In the last days of the fourth world I wished to
make a
map for those who would climb through the hole
in the

sky. The map must be of sand and can't be read
by
ordinary light. It must carry fire to the next tribal
town,
for renewal of spirit. For the soul is a wanderer
with
many hands and feet. The map must be of sand
and can't
be read by ordinary light. It must carry fire to the
next
tribal town, for renewal of spirit. (1-7)

It seems that Harjo addresses the young generation. She emphasizes on the importance of Native memory and heritage for the survival of Native American people and nation. She creates a spiritual journey through a map built on the foundation of history. She focuses on the principle that one should have the awareness of the past to be able to continue forward to the future. The poem is not an ordinary map but a guide that Harjo wishes to create. Therefore, both the poet and the readers are engaged in a figurative travel. The starting point of the map is rooted in the past of Indian history. Harjo emphasizes that the map is made of sand. This suggests the ability of sand to move easily and carry the fire into other tribes. The fire here, exemplifies knowledge and traditions that is transformed from tribe to another, and between the past and the present from one generation to another.

In her book, *With the Witnesses: Poetry, Compassion, and Claimed Experience* (2017), Dale Tracy argues that the map in this poem is a metaphor of memory which manifested in the Creek legends that draw this map by reflecting the nation's culture and language (89). The tribal voice can be found in their legends that can create a physical map to keep the nation's culture alive. This necessity of keeping the Native tradition is emphasized more profoundly when Harjo warns against what people will find in their map in the new world:

Take note of the proliferation of supermarkets and malls, the altars of money. They best describe the detour from grace.

Keep track of the errors of our forgetfulness; the fog steals our children while we sleep.

Flowers of rage spring up in the depression. Monsters are born there of nuclear anger.

Trees of ashes wave good-bye to good-bye and the map appears to disappear.

We no longer know the names of the birds here, how to speak to them by their personal names.

Once we knew everything in this lush promise.

What I am telling you is real and is printed in a warning on the map. Our forgetfulness stalks us, walks the earth behind us, (6-13)

Harjo anticipates that in the new century with the increasing dominant modern civilization and capitalism, Native people may become distant from their tribal traditions. She warns the future generation from the possibility of forgetting their own culture. This idea is depicted through people's isolation from nature. Their inability to speak to birds suggests their separation from Native culture. In *Ecology and Literatures in English: Writing to Save the Planet* (2019), Francoise Besson states that this separation results from people's incapability to listen to nature's voice and read its "writings" in the modern economic world. As the hierarchal system refuses the language of Native people for economic and political purposes, they also reject the language of nonhuman nature (69). Humans have committed sins of forgetting how to communicate with nature. Their deeds of pollution and the devastation of forests resulted in the destruction of the world. Through poetry, Harjo attempts to keep people in an awareness of their connection with nature which was central to Indian tribal culture. To avoid forgetting that pursues them, they should remain adherent to their tribal culture otherwise, their map will disappear and they will lose their

identity. In order to maintain a balance in a world filled with multiple identities, an individual must find a clear direction in the journey of self-discovery. Therefore, an individual's track must start from history as a starting point to wholeness. In the last part of the poem Harjo creates a perfect world for her people as it represents the Indian tribal lifestyle:

You will see red cliffs. They are the heart, contain the ladder.

A white deer will greet you when the last human climbs from

The destruction. Remember the hole of shame marking the act

of abandoning our tribal grounds.

We were never perfect.

Yet, the journey we make together is perfect on this earth who

Was once a star and made the same mistakes as humans.

We might make them again, she said.

Crucial to finding the way is this: there is no beginning or end

You must make your own map. (25-32)

The natural landscape that future generations would be seen in the new world that created a kind of optimistic tone. It reflects Harjo's ambition to be in a world governed by the tribal consciousness. The shame Harjo feels resulted from the forced displacement of her Creek nation and the loss of their lands and traditions. It seems that the dispossession of Native people that runs through her memory is reflected through her fear from the shame of forgetting tribal history. Yet, Harjo justifies "we were never perfect". She admits their weakness as humans and she calls for overcoming this feeling of shame through remembrance. She desires a journey to a new beginning, to the perfectness in an imaginary future without the existence of oppressive power. The white deer that

Harjo mentions in the second line of this part symbolizes the peace they will find after their survival from the destruction of colonization. The transformation of the deer is a part of embracing the tribal traditions. Such references to the Native tribal life and culture will guide people in their journey to the new world. By embracing such a tribal vision, Craig Womack confirms that this is not a dream or a fantasy, but a true belief that America will eventually return under the perspective of the indigenous people which is based on peace and equality among people of different colors and the attachment to the natural world (Womack 230). Through transforming the tribal vision into the future, Harjo hopes for a world without colonialism or any existence of the patriarchal oppressive system. Harjo says: "You must make your own map". This line is an imperative which suggests that the journey to this survival can be achieved only through an awareness of Native history and traditions which is the path to the perfect world that Harjo dreams of. Nixon argues that the child girl whom Harjo addresses in "A Map to The Next World" represents the future generation, yet the poem is an advice that all humans on earth must make their map that makes them aware of their circular existence in this universe. The mother earth, star, is the real guidance to human travellers. It teaches them how the universe is based on a non-hierarchical and nonlinear system in which all humans and non-humans are connected and the past is a part from the present and ultimately the past leads to the future (179).

Conclusions

This paper reaches to several conclusions. It proves that ecofeminism stands against all kinds of oppression. It defies dualism, hierarchies and the separation of human and non-human world. Ecofeminism based its views on diversity; it values equality, the acceptance, and the connectedness of all living things. By returning to the tribal memory, Harjo needs to find cultural identity and to prove that the Indian people were marked distinctively by history, nation ,and cultural heritage that cancelled the patriarchal view of looking at them as

downs, others, or associated with femininity and nature. Harjo insists that the past is connected to the present and the future. Through memory, she preserves the Native cultural identity and transforms Native traditions into the present and future generations. This paper proves that the ecofeminist thought can be found by returning to the ancient tribal memory because Native American culture and traditions were based on the interconnectedness of all living things. There were no hierarchies or oppression against people or nature until the arrival of western patriarchal culture. This paper shows that by defying the western concept of time linear and adopting the Native concept of time nonlinearity, the Native ecofeminist traditions and culture could be transformed into the present and future generations to create a new world that will be free from patriarchy.

الذاكرة وأجيال المستقبل: دراسة نسوية بيئية في شعر جوي هارجو

الكلمات المفتاحية: نسوية بيئية، جوي هارجو، الذاكرة القبلية لهارجو

أ.م.د. ناهض فالح سليمان

nahidhum@gmail.com

اليمامة قيس يوسف

yamama.alqaisy@gmail.com

الملخص

يواجه سكان أميركا الأصليين في الوقت الراهن تحديات كبيرة في محاولتهم لأثبات هويتهم الأصلية في مجتمع متعدد الأعراق. حيث تأثرت الهوية الثقافية للسكان الأصليين بالاستعمار الأوربي الذي ساهم الى حد كبير في طمس هويتهم وتاريخهم الثقافي. تهدف هذه الدراسة الى الكشف عن دور الذاكرة في تعزيز الشعور بالانتماء لدى الشاعرة الامريكية جوي هارجو وأيضا تساهم في خلق حالة من التوازن وتحقيق العدالة الاجتماعية لجميع ساكني الأرض وتؤكد على دور الذاكرة في استعادة الهوية الثقافية المفقودة. تتناول الدراسة شعر جوي هارجو، شاعرة أميركية من أصل هندي التي تحاول ان تكشف عن المبادئ النسوية البيئية الموجودة قديما في عادات وتقاليد السكان الأصليين وتستخدمها كقوة حقيقية للوقوف بوجه الظلم والقمع الذي يواجهه الهنود الحمر من قبل النظام القمعي في المجتمع الحديث.

Works Cited

Allen, Paula Gunn. *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian*

Tradition. Boston: Beacon, 1986. Print.

Besson, Francoise. *Ecology and Literatures in English: Writing to Save the Planet*.

Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019. Print

Bruchac, Joseph. *Survival this Way: Interviews with American Indian Poets*.

Tucson: U of Arizona P, 1987. Print.

Bryson, J. Scott. "Finding the Way Back: Place and Space in the Ecological Poetry

of Joy Harjo." *The West Side of Any Mountain: Place, Space, and Ecopoetry*.

Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 2005. Print.

Charles, Ron. Joy Harjo is the first Native American U.S. poet laureate. *The*

Washington Post.com. The Washington Post, 19 June 2019 Web. 12

Aug.2019. Web.

Coltelli, Laura. *The Spiral of Memory*. Ed. Laura Coltelli. Ann Arbor: U of

Michigan P, 1996. Print.

---. *Winged Words: American Indian Writers Speak*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1990.

Print.

Crawford, J. Suzaane and Dennis F.Kelly. *American Indian Religious Traditions: An*

Encyclopedia. California: ABC-CLIO, 2005. Print.

Dailey, Jessica. "The Nature of Identity: Ecofeminism, Women's Poetry, and

Reclaiming Power through the Recognition of Parallel Oppressions."

Thesis. Eastern Michigan University, 2017. Web. 23 Aug .2019.

<<http://commons.emich.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1516>>.

Dreese, Donelle N. *Ecocriticism: Creating Self and Place in Environmental and*

American Indian Literatures. New York: Peter Lang, 2002. Print.

Dunaway, David King and Sara L. Spurgeon. Eds. *Writing the Southwest*.

Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 2003.Print.

Garrd, Greta. *Ecofeminism Women, Animals, Nature* .Ed. Greta Garrd. Philadelphia:

Temple UP, 1993.Print.

Garrd, Greta and Patrick D. Murphy, eds. *Ecofeminist Literary Criticism:Theory,*

Interpretation,Pedagogy. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1998. Print.

Harjo, Joy. *In Mad Love and War*. Hanover: Wesleyan UP, 1990.Print.

---. *The Woman Who Fell from the Sky*. New York/London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1994.Print.

---. *A Map to the Next New World: Poetry and Tales*. New York: Norton, 2000.Print.

---. *How We Became Human: New and Selected Poems, 1975 – 2001*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004. Print.

---. *The Spiral of Memory: Interviews*. Ed. Laura Coltelli. An Arbor: U of Michigan

P,1996.Print.

---. “Memory, a Living Being: A Conversation with Joy Harjo.” Interview by James Ricks, Mara Efimov, and Arthur Rodrigues. *Shenandoah*.68.2.

(2019): n. pag. Web. 21 Jun.2019. <
<https://shenandoahliterary.org/682/>>.

---. “Weaving Stories for Food.” Interview. *The Spiral of Memory* .By Donelle R.

Ruwe . Ed. Laura Coltelli. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1996.124-132. Print.

Harjo, Joy and Tanaya Winder. *Soul Talk, Song Language: Conversations with Joy*

Harjo.Middletown, CT: Wesleyan U P, 2011. Print.

King, Ynestra. *The Ecology of Feminism and the Feminism of Ecology, in Healing*

the Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism. Ed. Judith Plant Santa Cruz, Calif:

- New Society Publishers.1989.Print.
- Hanna, Sally. "War, Death and What Remains in the Poetry of Joy Harjo." Athens
Journal of Philology.1.1 (2014): 9-22.Web.26.July.2019.
- Lang, Nancy. "Twin Gods Bending Over: Joy Harjo and Poetic Memory".
MELUS
.18.3 (1993):41-49.Print.
- Mellor, Mary. *Feminism and Ecology: An Introduction*. New York : Polity Press, 1997.Print.
- Merchant, Carolyn. *Radical Ecology: The Search for a Liveable World*.New York:
Routledge 1992.Print.
- Murphy, Patrick. D. *Literature, Nature, and Other: Ecofeminist Critiques*. Albany:
New York UP, 1995. Print.
- Nixon, V. Angelique. "Poem and Tale as Double Helix in Joy Harjo's A Map to the Next World" *Bloom's Modern Critical Views: Native American Writers*. Ed. Harlood Bloom. New York: Celsea House, 2010.Print.
- Orenstein, Gloria and Iren Diamond. *Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism*. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1990.Print.
- Smith. Andrea. *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*. Durham,
NC: Duke UP, 2015.Print.
- Smith, Patricia Clark, with Paula Gunn Allen. "Earthy Relations, Carnal Knowledge: Knowledge Southwestern American Indian Women Writers and Landscape." *The Desert Is No Lady: Southwestern Landscapes in Women's Writing and Art*. Ed. Vera Norwood and Janic Monk. New Haven: Yale UP, 1987.Print.
- Spretnak, Charlene. *Reweaving the World: Ecofeminism: Our Roots and Flowering*.
San Francisco: Sierr Club Books, 1990.Print.

Tracy, Dale. *With the Witnesses: Poetry, Compassion, and Claimed Experience*.

Montreal: MC Gill- Queen's UP, 2017.Print.

Warren J. Karen .*Ecofeminist Philosophy: A Western Perspective on What it is and Why it Matters*. Lanham, Boulder, New York, Oxford:

Rowman, 2000. Print.

--- ed. *Ecofeminism: women, culture, nature*. Indiana UP: Bloomington and Indianapolis,1997.Print.

Womack, Craig S. *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism*. Minneapolis:

U of Minnesota P, 1999.Print.