

Research Article

Subjugation of Indigenous Land: The Geographical Depletion of Place Depicted in Linda Hogan's *Mean Spirit*

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Abstract

Linda Hogan is a Chickasaw writer who has been always concerned about the issue of place in her literary works since place is taken as a witness, participant and even sufferer of the Native American people's colonial history. Meanwhile, the native belief regarding human relationships to land and place in cosmological and ecological aspects can also well illustrate her initial concern of place. This paper is to situate the analysis of place within the context of postcolonial and ecological avenues, exploring the geographical depletion of the local place, and further reproducing the colonized and displaced situation of indigenous land. Through the representation of land loss history represented in her first novel *Mean Spirit*, this study is intended to draw upon the concerning social elements resulting in the native people's land cession experience from two aspects, colonial conquest and capital expansion, thus generalizing Hogan's attitude toward land as a component of the local place and conceptualizing her land ethic stereotype. In a nutshell, the land-language concept revealed in Hogan's literary work encompasses the idea of caring for and listening to the place and ultimately demonstrates her land ethic doctrine that can be comprehended as her place-oriented proposition and a new strategy of resistance against the colonial and ecological crisis.

Keywords

Linda Hogan, Place, Subjugation of Indigenous Land, *Mean Spirit*, Land Ethics

1. Introduction

Inducted into the Chickasaw¹ Hall of Fame in 2007, Linda Hogan (1947-) has been commonly acknowledged as one of the prestigious Native American women writers whose oeuvre

ranges over poetry, essays, plays, short stories and fiction. Among these works, her first novel *Mean Spirit* (1990) [1] has once been nominated as one of three finalists for the 1991 Pulitzer Prize. Place, which is foregrounded as a witness, participant, even sufferer in the historical imperialism process rather than a bystander to the survival experience of Native Americans, has always been the first concern in Linda Hogan's literary creation. Moreover, she touches on the elements of place that underlie much of her literary works, asserting her preliminary attitude towards the Native American's cosmologic and intimate links with the place.

1 The Chickasaw are an indigenous people of the Southeastern Woodlands. In early times, the Chickasaw tribe was a component of a vast ethnological province bounded on the north by the Ohio River, the Gulf of Mexico on the south and the Mississippi River on the west. After the colonial years, the United States considered the Chickasaw one of the Five Civilized Tribes. Resisting European-American settlers encroaching on their territory, they were forced to move to Indian Territory (Oklahoma) during the era of Indian Removal in the 1830s. Most Chickasaw now live in Oklahoma. See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chickasaw>

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Conceiving place as a complex web of meaning woven from these influences is central to the discussion of Hogan's place-oriented approach to her fiction and demands attention to the layers of colonial legacy and ecological impacts that shape both place and the people who populate it. This paper is to situate the analysis of place within the context of postcolonial and ecological avenues, exploring the geographical depletion of the local place, and further reproducing the colonized and displaced situation of the indigenous land.

Hogan's literary works have aroused great academic interest and previous analyses of place in her fiction have been conducted from various aspects, including the politics of place, the narrative power of place, the ecofeminist approach to place, the multidisciplinary approach to place, and the ecocritical studies of place and sense of self. Elizabeth Blair has argued that Hogan often retells the native people's land loss history to reveal the place's political function in resisting colonial forces [2] (p. 20). On the narrative power of place, most of the criticisms have been centered on its aesthetic significance in inspiring the dialogue between nature and text, or between writers and readers. Laura Virginia Castor discerns that through images of interior houses, bodies and exterior landscapes in *Solar Storms* (1995), Hogan aims to stimulate her "readers to recognize empathetic connections between landscapes and humans, and among characters" [3] (p. 175) and therefore to underscore "the importance of developing empathy as an analytical tool for reading texts by Native American writers" [3] (p. 162). Besides, ecological criticism is apt to lay stress on the agency of place, generally focusing on the healing power of the place or the interactivity between humans, animals and environment. Chinese critics have also focused on certain physical settings to demonstrate the relationship between identity and place, and to illustrate the changing nature of place attachment within the context of globalization [4] (p. 96). In addition to specific physical places, other studies have emphasized the imaginative function of place in anti-colonial discourse, its ecological significance in ecocritical contexts, and its dual function in both areas [5] (p. 112).

In reviewing previous studies of Hogan's work concerning place, this article aims to address research gaps by examining the issue of geographical depletion of the local place. Through the representation of the colonized situation of the indigenous land represented in her first novel *Mean Spirit*, this study is intended to generalize the author's attitude toward the land as a component of the local place, thus conceptualizing her land ethic stereotype.

2. Subjugation of Indigenous Land

Land as the essential element of a place, as indicated above, must be explored in a general context of the native epistemological system. Different from the western linear notions, Mother Earth or the Sacred Hoop is the metaphysical

concept around which all else in the Native world is intertwined [6] (p. 72). In this native philosophy, all native tribes believe that they have sacred truths of creation that is inherently tied to some specific places on Mother Earth. Just as Troy Johnson argues, "[t]he Cosmology of place for the members of these nations is central to their understanding of who they are and validates their relationship to the creator and their purpose within the Indigenous cosmology" [6] (p. 74). Therefore, place, in other words, earth or land is defined as a primary cosmological concept associated with sense of origin for many native people. Simon Ortiz once illustrates the centrality of land well in his writing:

Land and people are interdependent. In fact, they are one and the same essential matter of Existence. They cannot be separated and delineated into singular entities. If anything is most vital, essential, and absolutely important in Native cultural philosophy, it is the concept of interdependence: the fact that without land there is no life, and without a responsible social and cultural outlook by humans, no life-sustaining land is possible. [7] (p. xii)

Apart from the inherent role of land foregrounded in the native cosmology, this fundamental idea, furthermore, has been reinforced in the native holistic ecological perspective that puts essential value upon the totality of existence, making humanity equal to all nonhuman elements but superior to none and offering humankind crucial responsibility for the care of the land people inhabit [8] (p. 29). Reviewing the contemporary American Indian literary works, the scholar claims that "there does indeed exist an indigenous relationship to, appreciation for, awareness of, or understanding of the land that is significantly different from non-Indian relationships" [9] (p. 2).

These beliefs regarding human relationships to land and place in cosmological and ecological aspects can well illustrate Hogan's initial concern of place and the pervasive ethical regard for land embedded in her literary creation. As she remarks, these cosmological ideas are new to the white people because non-Indian American culture has no sincere connection with the earth or land, and this lacuna, as a result, has caused Native Americans to lose their sense of place in the white culture-dominated society. Besides, there is another factor weighing heavily in her decision of selecting land as the focal point in her fiction. It is the brutal history of land exploitation experienced by the native people over 400 years and this notorious land cession history has so far characterized the contemporary Indian people with the label of land-loss. To shoulder the responsibility of caring for land and of finding a way out for her landless people, Hogan hence professes that "[i]t has been my lifelong work to seek an understanding of the two views of the world, one as seen by native people and the other as seen by those who are new and young on this continent" [10] (p. 11). Given these factors, this section will explore the issue of land exploitation and condemnation in the indigenous habitat, by examining Hogan's first novel *Mean Spirit* in the context of colonial and ecological avenues.

2.1. Land Ravaged by Colonial Conquest

As the French author Franz Fanon once demonstrates, “[f]or a colonized people the most essential value, because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land: the land which will bring them bread and, above all, dignity” [11] (p. 9). Land, therefore has been identified as “a primary site of postcolonial recuperation, sustainability, and dignity” [12] (p. 3). And the native history embedded in land has often supplied ample information and dynamic methodology for understanding the transformative influence exerted by the colonial power. As the critics explains it, historicization becomes an essential approach to conducting postcolonial studies and is integral to building a comprehensive epistemological system of the indigenous land [12] (p. 4).

For Native Americans, their history of land loss lasting for centuries has consisted of some infamous terms or acts, such as “Indian Reservation”, “the Trail of Tears”, “Indian Removal Act”, and “Indian Relocation Act”. Since the outset of the European colonization of the American continent, the white settlers have often tried removing native peoples from their homeland. Their means varies from peaceful agreement to some treaties made under violence. Then, there comes the term “Indian Reservation”², which is a legal designation for an area of land managed by a federally recognized native tribe under the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs rather than the state governments.

The Indian Reservation system starts with “the Royal Proclamation of 1763” and the most well-known act is “the Indian Removal Act of 1830” which finally results in the issue of “the Trail of Tears”³. This issue signifies a series of forced relocations of about 60,000 native Indians living on land in Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, North Carolina and Florida, where their ancestors have been dwelling for generations. Because white settlers want to grow cotton on the Indians’ land, the federal government then force the natives to leave their ancestral homelands and walk to the designated Indian Territory areas to the west of the Mississippi River. The relocated natives have suffered from exposure, disease, and starvation in this journey, and approximately 4,000 have died before reaching their destinations. This difficult and deadly journey under the threat of the white army, starting from the winter of 1831, is called “the Trail of Tears”.

Another influential bill in the course of native land cession is “the Dawes Act”⁴ passed in 1887, which authorizes the government to separate tribal lands by partitioning them into individual-owned lots. And only those natives accepting the allotments are allowed to be US citizens. This law has been explicitly intended to enforce the European-American farming styles and aid the natives assimilate into the mainstream society, thereby protecting them from the white’s further encroachment on their land. Nonetheless, the truth is

over ninety million acres of communal land have been stripped from native peoples and sold to non-natives owing to the implementation of this bill. As a result, each family receive 640 acres or less averagely but they are deprived of the best land and forced to move to areas in which they find extremely difficult to make a living. By privatizing ownership of the communal land, the Dawes Act has overtly disrupted the native community by breaking down the tribal social construct and economic foundation as well. With the enacting of these reservation acts, thousands of acres of the native land have been successively occupied by the white settlers over the duration of two centuries.

Hogan’s first novel, *Mean Spirit* set in 1921, is grounded in the lasting influence of “the Dawes Act”, which legalizes some complications, such as land transactions, guardianships, trust funds, and payment days in the reservation of Oklahoma, Watona town, mainly inhabited by the relocated Osage people. Created with the background of the notorious event “Osage Indian Murders”, the novel unfolds how the avaricious white merchant John Hale, who has been coveting the oil reserves in the native territory, attempts to obtain head rights and royalties during the oil boom in the 1920s. To native dwellers in Watona, the discovery of oil in their hometown proves a greater curse rather than a blessing. When they become raptured for the sudden wealth due to the finding of oil reserves on their land, these Osage people seem not well prepared for their social and economic change and the subsequent pressures of exploitation. In order to control Osage’s lands and grab the inheritance, John Hale, like a ghost in Watona, keeps haunting every oil land owner and is virtually implicated in a series of murders by shooting, poisoning, and exploding in the native neighborhood. The story represents how the Osage in Watona, whose ancestors have driven from their home to the reservation, now have to confront the similar story of land dispossession in the oil boom.

Through the profound dialogue between history and land in the progress of imperialism, it is supposedly suggested that the native individual, the community, and the land are always inextricable in the creating of the colonial history. In *Mean Spirit*, land, as a recurring term and the driving force, develops the narrative of history thoroughly. To be specific, land loss seems to characterize the whole marginalized process of contemporary Native Americans, and the Osage people in Watona is a good case in point. Through the historical lens, the novel is intended to illustrate how the native land, as the witness of the colonial conquest, functions as a primary site interacting with the individual and the community.

And the historical events connected with land theme in the story are “the Trail of Tears” and “the Massacre at Wounded Knee”. The sudden wealth from oil resource has brought not only the Osage’s quest for material comfort but also the white villain John Hale’s greed for occupying the oil land. Like a hurricane, dozens of murders have violently swept across the

2 See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_reservation

3 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trail_of_Tears

4 <https://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-the-dawes-act.htm#didyouknowout>

town inhabited by the Osage and the attendant terror, grief and despair amid the Indian people have almost knocked them down. Obsessed with the sudden death of her fiancé killed secretly by Hale, the desperate native girl, Lettie, can't help contrasting her sorrow now with her ancestor's terrible experience one hundred years ago and then flashes back to "[h]er grandmother who had come to Oklahoma over the Trail of Tears. Soldiers had forced the line of people west, out from their Mississippi homeland. They were beat and lost, forced to give up everything that had been their lives" [1] (p. 210). In the past, her grandmother and other tribal people expelled from their ancestral land to Indian Territory of Oklahoma, went through the trail of tears on foot and in chains without any food and supplies while now the communal people are facing a series of murders, extortions, and swindles centering on the successive land deprivation.

Hence, Lettie's recollection of her grandmother's trip over this deadly trail primarily zooms in on one of the typical histories of the natives' land loss, revealing the continuity of colonizer's squatting on the native land sustaining from the early military conquest to the modern capital exploitation. It has been documented that some white people in the early years of their settlement believe that the most effective way to solve the "Indian problem" is to "civilize" the primitive natives by encouraging them to adopt European-style farming and economic practices such as owning land and other property. This civilization program, ostensibly sounding reasonable for the natives, is nonetheless served for the European Americans to conduct their farming practice on the native fertile land. Yearning to make fortunes by growing cotton, the white settlers would do anything to loot the land by murdering or burning the native's houses and towns until they have got the political support from the government since the enactment of "the Indian Removal act of 1830". As a result, thousands of native people have been expelled from their homeland under the military force, and most have lost lives during the violent conflict. Though some can survive it, they become homeless and rootless for losing their homes and relatives. Despite all this, in Lettie's memory, the native ancestors on the trail, "beat and lost", still "thought of nothing more than to how to go on, to preserve their wounded race" [1] (p. 210). During "the Trail of Tears", a large number of native people lose their lives, yet for the tribe or the race, there are still some chances for the survivors to go on, and to "preserve their wounded race" by reconstructing their broken community. Removal and survival, the Indian land in Hogan's hands seem to be a historical process characterized by the infinite continuity across generations.

To these Native Americans driven to the Indian Territory from homeland, there are seemingly some hopes for the continuation of the tribe. While, to the Sioux people, the only chance for the community to resist and revive has been overtly deprived by the armed forces in "the Massacre at Wounded Knee". As mentioned above, owing to the influence of "the Trail of Tears" and other land Acts, the native land has been

largely occupied by the white colonizers. To reassert the territorial sovereignty and resist the land conquest, some leaders attempt to invent new rituals to reunite the broken tribal members and the most significant is the Ghost Dance, proposed by Wovoka, a shaman of the Northern Paiute tribe. Wovoka's most important prophecy is that the white people would be banished from the native land and the buffalo, hunted to extinction by settlers, would return and bring a revival of the native way of life. Afraid of losing their occupied land and threatened by the native's reunite and resistance, the white government sent its army to indiscriminately murder hundreds of Sioux men, women, and children near Wounded Knee Creek in the winter of 1890. The battle field of this slaughter has been recounted precisely by the witness, Lionel Tall in *Mean Spirit*:

[H]e found his people gone, the bodies of children frozen in the snow. The frozen women lay in broken clusters where they tried to escape. When Tall saw his wife, the young son in her arms, he sat on the ice beside them. He tried to put the frozen organs back into the boy; they spilled out onto the snow. [1] (p. 221)

Lionel Tall, who was then in his 30 and believed in Ghost Dance, went away from home to spread Wovoka's new religion to save his people, and thus survived from this massacre in his hometown Wounded Knee Creek. While retelling his witness to the death of his family and his people, Tall, a senior now, still grieves and is restless about the past, even remembers clearly the tears frozen on his skin when finally finding his dead wife and the frozen young son on the battle field. Experiencing the traumatic colonial history, Tall proclaims that "[u]ncle Sam was a cold uncle with a mean soul and a cruel spirit" [1] (p. 221) and his vulnerable people could not "survive the ways of the Americans, especially the government with rules and words that kept human life at a distance" [1] (p. 221). These rules and words are only regulations working for the sake of white colonizers and Uncle Sam has employed his guns and army to surrender these native people who are about to fight for their homeland. So far, "the Massacre at Wounded Knee" has marked the definitive end of the native resistance to the white people's encroachment upon their land.

In light of these two historical issues truly reproduced in the novel, Hogan posits that addressing historical colonial violence is integral to perceiving literary representations of geography, for the land is particularly "saturated by traumas of conquest" [13] (p. 5). Land encodes time, demonstrating that histories imbued with the land have supplied dynamic methodologies for illuminating the transformative influence of colonial power. By means of reviewing the colonial history in *Mean Spirit*, Hogan aims to underscore that the land ravaged in history testimonies the brutality of colonizers in expelling the natives from the homeland or slaughtering countless native lives, which results in a sense of landlessness for the individual and even a sense of rootlessness for the communal tribe. Moreover, owing to the inextricable links

among the individual, the community and the land, the geographical depletion is doomed to erase the primitive economic and cultural codes in the tribal community, resulting in the native's dislocated sense of place as a whole.

2.2. Land Depleted by Capital Expansion

In 1830, native people were driven off their homeland to Oklahoma for the white settler's need for cotton plantation, and almost one hundred years later in 1920, the native citizens in Oklahoma were murdered and threatened to move from their designated territory again because of the white businessman's greed for oil reserves. Seemingly, the historical process of land loss and land depletion for the natives is always characterized by the never-ending continuity generation after generation. But where on earth should the native people leave for? The apocalyptic final end of the novel, *Mean Spirit*, fails to offer an appropriate answer to these landless Native Americans. Either in her grandmother's experience in "the Trail of Tears" in 1830 or Lettie's heartbroken misfortune in the oil boom in 1920, land as the sufferer of the colonial and neo-colonial process, keeps witnessing and recovering the white colonizer's countless desires for natural resources that originally belong to the native people. Therefore, "[i]t proves that oppression of human resources has an intrinsic link with the exploitation of natural resources at the hand of the oppressor" [14] (p.7).

The white settlers, guided by the ideology of Manifest Destiny, believe that they are entitled not only to civilizing the primitive natives by driving them off their homelands to reservations, but also to trivializing and dismissing the role of native land by exploiting and depleting the land resource in their favor. As some critics argue, "the postcolonial field [that] is inherently anthropocentric overlooks a long history of ecological concern in postcolonial criticism" [15] (p. 3). Thus, Linda Hogan, as a contemporary environmental activist, would situate the land narrative within the intertwined context of postcolonial and ecological avenues in her novel, *Mean Spirit*, implying that the native land tenure and environmental crisis are ever interwoven in the native colonized history.

Conceived with deep and ethical regard for the native land, Hogan always infuses the native vision of place in her literary creation and her land view particularly echoes the land ethic proposed by Aldo Leopold, the famous American ecological pioneer. Ethics, in a philosophical field, request all members of a group to treat each other with respect and care for the mutual benefit of all. And, a land ethic is such a philosophy about how human beings should regard the land ethically. This term was coined by Aldo Leopold in his classic book, *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There* (1949). There he proclaims that there is a radical need for a new ethic dealing with human's relation to land and other nonhuman constituents. This land ethic "simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land" [16] (p. 173). This ethic embedded in

the expanded notion of "community" intentionally foregrounds that "the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts" [16] (p. 173). In Leopold's vision, the relationships between people and land are intertwined and reciprocal: care for people definitely cannot be separated from care for the land.

In brief, a land ethic switches the role of human beings from "conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it" [16] (p. 174). It implies "a holistic, ecological perspective, one that places essential value upon the totality of existence, making humanity equal to all elements but superior to none and giving humankind crucial responsibility for the care of the world we inhabit" [8] (p. 29). This ecological land notion radically contradicts the dominated western ideology imbued with the anthropocentric assumptions about othering nonhuman lives, the land in particular. By juxtaposing the native citizens conceived with the ecological land vision and the white businessman believing in the human-centered concept, Linda Hogan intentionally exposes the incremental land crisis catalyzed by capital expansion and the colonial transformation on the tribal communities, thereby advocating her typical vision of the land ethic.

In *Mean Spirit*, Hogan has respectively created a series of native citizens in Watona, who insists on the inherent view that they are plain members of the nature and they should take the land, animals and plants as friends. The heroine, Belle Graycloud, a light-skinned Osage woman, is the grandmother of her family. As the grandmother, she is actually the matriarch of her family, even that of her community. Meanwhile, as the guardian of nature, she takes deep love for her land and all the lives which grow upon it. Taking the role of keeper of bees and protector of bats, and the source of domestic order, she, at first glance, "looked small, but in spite of her slight stature, she was a giant on the inside, and hard to reckon with" [1] (p. 13). Once, when one member of her land community is in danger, she would do her utmost to protect it, never concerned with her own safety. One morning, on her way to the town, she came across a truck loaded with eagle carcasses, which was stopping by the road side, then she ran toward the truck, aiming to prevent eagle hunters from sending eagles to taxidermy shops in New York. Her reaction is graphically represented in the paragraph:

"What have you done?" She charged at them like a goat and she kicked at their legs. She broke a window out of the truck and when she pulled her bare hand back, it was bleeding from the cuts. Again, the men tried to pull her away but again she charged them, screaming and attacking, until they were forced to hold her down on the hard ground. She wailed and cursed while they held her. She spit in their faces and hissed as they talk over how to keep the pesky old woman from assaulting them and their cargo. [1] (p. 110)

The strings of such verbs as "charge, kick, break, pull..., scream, attack, wail, curse, spit and hiss" have been proportionately assembled by Hogan to animatedly demonstrate that Belle, though a senior woman with a small

figure, seems more like a fighter, “hard to reckon with” [1] (p. 13) and brave enough to protect her interdependent parts in the land community. Belle’s fear and rage may be inexplicable to these eagle hunters who only regard the pesky woman as insane, yet Hogan’s description of the hunters through Osage eyes makes visible the true source of insanity: “they looked foreign and strange, like visitors from another world, a world that eats itself and uses up the earth” [1] (p. 114). Confronted with harms inflicted on eagles, the indispensable part of the land community, Belle has charged at hunters without hesitation because of the obligation to her land community and her role of the guardian of the nature. Hogan also develops another character, Michael Horse, a dreamer and prophet, who “was a good judge of people and [he] had what they called the sixth sense”, which empowers him with the capacity to talk with horses. Just like his name implies, Michael might be one member of the horse family and treats his horse like a brother and friend for they even play hide-and-seek in the hill. When most storylines are associated with the white businessman’s terrorizing and murdering the Osage, these depictions involved with the native’s reciprocal relationships with their land community sound like bright sunshine or glimmering hope for the Indian people to survive. Amid brutality, avarice, and grief, the world of *Mean Spirit* is still enchantingly lyrical and Hogan’s respect and regard for the land beauty never wavers.

When the native people see land as a community to which they belong, they may learn to use it with love and respect. Aldo Leopold calls for an acceptance of “the ecological conscience” which foregrounds conservation of land in terms of land use. In his vision, “conservation is a state of harmony between men and land” [16] (p. 176) and “a system of conservation based solely on economic self-interest is hopelessly lopsided. It tends to ignore, and thus eventually to eliminate, many elements in the land community that lack commercial value, but that are (as far as we know) essential to its healthy functioning” [16] (p. 181). To sum up, this land-use ethic ultimately advocates the preserving of the balance of land community, for the beauty, diversity and sustainability of land system.

In contrast, to the white colonizers conceived with anthropocentric assumptions in the process of capital expansion, this conservation-based land-use ethic does not exist and they have long been concerned only about the commercial value and economic self-interest in their land-use experience. The setting of *Mean Spirit* is the oil boom of the 1920s when major oil reserves have been discovered on the land that belongs to the Osage people in Oklahoma. The profitable oil fields immediately attract the attention of a large number of European Americans, including a white cowboy William K. Hale, who then becomes infamous as “King of the Osage Hills.” Hence, Hogan designs such a white villain, named John Hale in her novel, who has been implicated in murders of Osage natives so as to possess and exploit the oil field. Without the ecological conscience, John Hale yearns for

the commercial profits by brutally depleting land resources and enslaving their native owners as well.

Landless men labored out there. They worked for John Hale, the oilman, who kept watch over them in their steel-toe boots as they pulled the great chain back and forth and, inch by inch, drove the pipe down back and into the earth. The sound of metal grated against metal out there. Gas rumbled under the ground like earth complaining through an open mouth, moaning sometimes and sometimes roaring with rage. [1] (p. 148)

As the scholar points out, “[t]he Euroamericans in Hogan’s novel have a low regard for any kind of natural resource, reducing both the land and the Native Americans to exploitable commodities” [17] (p. 50). In this scene, Hogan represents oil corporations and the white oilman as ravenous and malevolent monster that keeps hunting and consuming the native inhabitants, land and the whole ecosystem. Even in the modern era, the white capital force is still conducting the practice of land exploitation in the form of internal colonialism. To take control of the oil field, the oilman, John Hale resorts to violence and murders to evoke an atmosphere of terror and despair in the town of Watona. Under such circumstance, “the Indians lack all subjectivity; they are objects to be cleared or hunted” [16] (p. 50). Landless and hopeless, the native people are forced to work for John Hale to exploit the oil field and exhaust their own land resource. “The Osage are shot, blown up, and poisoned in the same manner, and for the same reasons, that the earth is drilled, dynamited, and despoiled for oil” [16] (p. 50). The richest Indian woman, Grace Blanket is shot in the heart because of her oil land, just as the earth is enduring the metal penetration of the drill. The poor Benoit is hanged by swaying from his own belt, while metal chains are swung back and forth inside oil derricks to push pipe into the ground. In this setting, Hogan metaphorically represents that land or Earth incarnates in the form of humans with senses and expresses its pain and complaint about the dig, drill and hurt by moaning and roaring, suggesting that land, as the pivotal role in the community, is facing the same fate of being tortured and exploited with the natives by the internal colonialism. However, to make a living, these natives have to be helpers of the white villain, doing harms to their Mother Earth.

Native American tribes always utilize land resource moderately so as not to disturb natural balance and the Osage have great difficulty understanding “the literal and narrow materialism of the Euroamericans” [17] (p. 57). By juxtaposing the native people’s regard for the land with the Euro-American’s economic self-interest land-use ethics, Linda Hogan tends to, on one hand, foreground the catastrophic effects on the native land and its inhabitants catalyzed by the capital expansion under neo-colonial forces; on the other propose her land ethic which highlights a holistic existence of all the lives, including human and nonhuman constituents.

As some scholars once argue, “imperialism after all is an

act of geographical violence through which virtually every space in the world is explored, charted, and finally brought under control” [12] (p. 3). To the Native Americans, the history of colonial servitude is respectively inaugurated by the loss of native land to the white outsider; and thereafter the exploitation and depletion of land resources to the outmost.

3. Conclusion

As demonstrated in the analysis, for native writers such as Linda Hogan, the process of decolonization initially involves the representation and eradication of colonial histories marked by the continuous subjugation and depletion of land, followed by the development of new sites and strategies of resistance. Hence, in *Mean Spirit*, Hogan recounts the infinite ever-expanding colonized history saturated by traumas of land loss for the native people, implying the subsequent disruption of social structure, economic system and communal society as a whole. Moreover, Hogan speaks to the conspicuously different land conceptions between the native and the white. Most native people are unaccustomed to the European idea of taking land as individual property that can be conquered by force, even despoiled randomly in favor of humans. And this contrast in land concept gives rise to the accelerating land crisis in the course of capital expansion depicted in the novel *Mean Spirit*, which expresses her calling for an acceptance of sanctity of the Earth and ethical regard for the native land. This kind of land-language concept revealed in Hogan’s literary work encompasses caring for and listening to the place and ultimately demonstrates her native land stereotype that can be comprehended as her place-oriented proposition and a new strategy of resistance against the colonial and ecological crisis.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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