

Healing and the environment in American Indian biographies

Shaheena Ayub Bhatti (PhD)

Fulbright Post-Doc: University of Arizona, Associate Professor of English

Director, Research

NUML, Sector H-9, Islamabad, Pakistan

sabhatti@numl.edu.pk

“This is the Earth, healed again, growing green and blue. I want you to remember this exactly as it is, and then go and tell the people that if enough of us hold this image in their minds, we can heal the Earth and make it like it was a long time ago.” This statement by Grandfather Rolling Thunder is one of the many made by Native American medicine men who have an affinity with nature. This affinity is reflected in their everyday lives as medicine men who have been entrusted with the task of healing the body, mind and spirit of their fellow men and women. Using Glotfelty’s theory of Eco-criticism, this paper addresses the variety of issues facing American Indian beliefs and the way of life that they have adopted for themselves or that has been forced upon them by the political, social and economic situation. In doing this, the focus will be on trying to determine how far traditional beliefs have impacted the environment, at the same time that they have managed to make a place for themselves in contemporary theories of conventional medicine.

Keywords: Eco-criticism, American Indian, Medicine, Medicine men