

The Discourse of Madness and Environmental Justice in Linda Hogan's Novel *Solar Storms*

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*We have stripped all things of their mystery
and numinosity; nothing is holy any longer.*
Carl Jung

The last few decades in American literature have seen the emergence of discourses that actively engage with environmental issues implying the need for a return to a spiritually informed way of life which restores the forgotten relations between human beings and the natural world. While these discourses of eco-criticism share a basic concern for environmental degradation and the ways to effect damage control and a healing of nature, they also differ in their evaluations of the relationship between the human and the natural world and in the ways goals and strategies are perceived. A number of US literary works written since 1980, such as John Cheever's *Oh What A Paradise It Seems*, John DeLillo's *White Noise*, and John Updike's *Rabbit At Rest* articulate mainstream concerns and ideas about the environment and reflect what Cynthia Dietering terms a "toxic consciousness," which sees the US as "post-natural" wasteland. (Adamson 56) A more politically oriented discourse which probes the connection between environmental degradation and class and race distinctions has emerged with what Joni Adamson calls "literature of environmental justice," defined by the works of writers such as Leslie Morrison Silko, Louise Erdrich, Simon Ortiz, Linda Hogan, Alice Walker, and Ana Castillo, to mention just a few. These writers examine experiences of environmental racism, a term that gained currency in the debates on the environment in 1987 when the United Church of Christ's Commission for Radical Justice published a report that found race to be the main factor in the location of toxic waste facilities (Adamson 129). In the literature of environmental justice, historical progress, which almost inevitably brings about degradation of the land, and experiences of environmental racism are also seen as a profanation of the sacred, leading to the loss of the moral and spiritual perspective in life.

Linda Hogan's poetry, fiction, and non-fiction have increasingly been linked to eco-criticism, eco-feminism, and the "literature of environmental justice." The incidents that trigger the action in her novels *Mean Spirit*, *Solar Storms*, and *Power* are based on actual events, yet the fictionalized form in which they are rendered reveals a deeper truth than the intricate procedures of the court in the novels can explain. As Barbara Cook points out, Hogan's "writing is often at the intersection of environmental matters and the historical and an ongoing treatment of American Indians, thus linking environmental justice and social justice issues"(Cook 1). Yet, it is in *Solar Storms* that the author

explicitly links the fates of a brutally abused mother, who in turn abuses her daughter, to a ruthlessly exploited and depleted landscape and tribal activism. The setting is the frozen North Country of the Great Lakes region in the late 1960s. The land is being drilled and dynamited to make way for the new dam. The rivers diverted from their ancient beds flood settlements and fertile land, killing game and driving people away. This violation of land and people is seen not only as another episode in the long history of dispossession and removal of Native people, but also as an act of madness and brutality that is internalized by human victims and often finds immediate manifestation in acts of destructive, incurable insanity. To explore this network of relations in *Solar Storms*, the author develops complex structures in her examination of interior and exterior landscapes as they bear directly upon the discourse of madness, environmental destruction, and healing in the female protagonist's physical, spiritual, and political journey to selfhood.

The novel is about Angel, a seventeen-year-old girl, who, having spent most of her life with different foster parents in Oklahoma, arrives at Fur Island, "the home of her great-grandmother Agnes and other relatives" (36). In her conscious search for self and healing she has to confront historical trauma as well as the rage of her own childhood, marked by the absence of her mother, Hannah, who has tortured and tried to kill her. *Solar Storms* continues the tradition established by Paula Gunn Allen's *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows* of questioning the relevance of current Western trauma paradigms to a Native American context.¹ Cathy Caruth, one of the leading western theorists in the field of psychoanalysis, considers the connection between trauma, time, and representation as crucial for the understanding and healing of trauma. The construction of linear plots in the process of retrieval of hurtful events and the fashioning of a temporal narrative self are at the core of this theoretical approach. Ultimately, such a paradigm aims at "disciplining" the subject, and making him/her capable of functioning "normally" in society again; whereas, as I will show later, Hogan's approach aims at the "patient's" growth, maturity and individuation, and the building of self confidence and autonomy. Trauma in *Solar Storms*, as a psychological and social-cultural phenomenon, produces a "rupture" in the wounded psyche/body and marks, in Lacanian terms, what is missing, that is, the absence of the Real. I will argue that Linda Hogan not only expands the understanding of trauma, but offers alternative ways of accessing repressed or lost memories by recreating traumatic experiences through testimony and the rewriting of myths.

Cathy Caruth defines trauma as "an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events, in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena" (11). Furthermore, such structures of "belated temporality" are thought to be accessible through evocations and analysis of repressed memory. Conversely, Linda Hogan's combination of chronological and achronological narratives highlights sensations which

¹The protagonist of the novel, Ephanie, gives up psychotherapy in favor of rituals of homecoming and healing. The structure of the novel suggests that since trauma fragments the self and creates a "cut" within the psyche, it is "unrepresentable in narrative terms" (Madsen 112).

are not available to the subject, because trauma disrupts the “I”, and hence chronology, or because the memory of it is lost, or is available only vicariously. For instance, Angel has no memory of her mother; only the scars on her body are a painful reminder of the missing parent. The lost memories, which create a gap in her psyche, are restored and made accessible to her by the testimonies and sacred stories, told by her grandmother Bush, by Agnes, and by Agnes’ mother Dora-Rouge. The chronological narrative of Angel’s initiatory canoe journey to Canada to meet with her mother and to take part in the demonstration against the building of the dam is interrupted by the cyclic time of sacred narratives. Thus historical, mundane time merges with and is transformed by the timelessness of the mythological. Significantly, in this sacred setting, Angel feels: “As if time were nothing at all. I was traveling backward in time toward myself at the same time I journeyed forward, like the new star astronomers found that traveled in two different directions at once” (64). This is one of many examples that foreground the heroine’s double consciousness, merging western discourse of science or Christian belief with that of traditional wisdom. As the stories talk to each other and interact with each other, they create a frame of reference in relation to which the traumatic experience acquires visibility and accessibility, and it can then be placed within the scope of communal experience and eventually sublimated.

The discourse of trauma and mental illness in the novel creates a relational, spatial model of interrelated narratives for retrieval of what has been lost and for healing, rather than a linear traumatic narrative. Angel craves continuity and connectedness when she says, “I wanted an unbroken line between me and the past. I want there to be no fragments and pieces left behind by fur traders, soldiers, priests, and schools (77). In her multilayered narrative of building wholeness, personal and collective trauma mingle, veer off and make new connections with other events, linked not by time but by their similarity and effect on subjectivity. One example is the story about the woman who “became winter’s mistress,” that, as we shall see later, both mirrors Hannah’s past and functions as a code for “reading” Hannah. It is this symbolization of the connection between similar hurtful events that create continuity in the discursive construction of subjectivity. Angel becomes fully aware of the healing power of words, and her narrative generates a new kind of “traumatic knowledge,” which helps, to quote Geoffrey Hartman, “to read the wound with the aid of literature” (544).²

“Sometimes I hear the voice of my great-grandmother, Agnes,” the seventeen-year-old narrator-protagonist, Angel, begins her story. After twelve years of separation from Bush, the wife of her grandfather Harold who raised her, she accidentally finds Agnes’ name in a court record and writes to her. Agnes knows that Angel is desperately looking for love, for what has been denied her in her childhood. This is why, on the day of her arrival, Agnes introduces her into her past with a story of deep love, evoking the day on which Bush, “prepared a feast to mourn Angel’s being given back to her abusive mother” (11). Bush invents a sacred, give-away ceremony, which is “an act of grief,” and

² It’s worth noting that according to Hartman this literary way of knowing combines “the literal and the figurative, insight and blindness, play and earnest, and linking inspiration to sound as well as to sense.” Obviously, there is similarity between Hartman’s definition of the literary way of knowing trauma and Hogan’s concept of the healing power of sacred stories and the “vocabulary of senses” in *Dwellings*.

like a priestess, officiates it, pretending that it is her tradition. “It was the holy sacrament of you we ate that day,” Agnes testifies and admonishes the girl, “so don’t think you were never loved” (16). On the other hand, Bush, whom Angel sees as “neither Catholic nor Protestant ... a person of the land,” and who “kept statutes of saints and crosses alongside eagle feathers, tobacco, and photographs of loved ones,” constructs a new ritual within the familiar traditional patterns in order to mend the broken chain of communal experience (71). Bush, the most fully developed, powerful and active character in the novel, has a highly hybrid identity with which she is perfectly comfortable. She uses extensively Native and Christian rituals of love and sacrifice to integrate modern, uncanny experience into boundless, sacred time. The ceremony she invents references both Christ’s ultimate sacrifice, and is an invariant of a traditional ritual. Thus, she is able to bridge both cultures and to act as a mediator between them.³ Agnes’ use of the Christian concept of the holy sacrament to transmit to the girl the intensity and endurance of personal and communal love is the first, most impressive feature bestowed on her newly emerging identity. It illustrates how Christian concepts and Native knowledge systems function as equally powerful codes for identity formation. Significantly, Angel’s transformation and rebirth in water shortly before she meets her dying mother is rendered through the story of Jonah when she says, “I sensed already, that the land on Fur Island, the water, would pull a person in, steal from them, that is would split them up transformed, like *Jonah from the belly of the whale*”[italics mine] (68). Like Jonah, at the end of the novel, she is “resurrected” and “transformed” and comes back to her community enlightened and ready to serve it.

In Angel’s discursive processing of personal and collective trauma we can identify what Lacan calls “a missed encounter with the Real” where the “Real” is not reality, but represents “precisely what is excluded from our reality, the margin of what is without meaning, and which we fail to situate and explore” (Leader 61).⁴ The dismembered colonial past which repeats itself in a new act of dispossession is another hurtful experience, which defies understanding and hence seems “unreal” in the normal course of Native lives. On the other hand, since the experience of a psychologically distressing event does not fit into usual human experience, it resurfaces in the form of “intrusive phenomena,” such as fear, terror and rage. Angel re-lives the pain of physical abuse, repeatedly inflicted by her mother, in the form of intense suffering, of cutting herself, or of bursting into uncontrollable rage. When during the party in her honor, Frenchie asks what happened to her face, referring to the scars, Angel remembers her reaction in this way: “I heard a voice yelling, “Damn it!” and it was me, my own voice, raging and hurt. There was anger in it, a deep pain, and the smell of hospitals of the past, the grafts that left my thigh gouges, the skin stolen from there to put my face together” (52). In this explosion we can identify the symptomatology of breaks and repetitions.

³ Laura Castor sees *Power* as “bridging the gaps between Native and Western understandings of place.”

⁴ I am fully aware of the current debates about whether the modalities and terminology of western cultural theory are adequate for the interpretation of American Indian texts. My belief is that since the American Indian writers use narrative structures that are clearly recognizable not only in western, but in many other cultures as well as all kinds of symbiosis of symbols, images, and linguistic strategies, the recourse to such terminology is justified.

Whenever the “missing event” is reconstructed through broken structures of memory, it also effects a break in the experience of a coherent self, thus causing excessive outbursts of uncontrollable anger. The incomprehensibility of the event causes pain and alienation which desperately need healing. “My ugliness, as I called it, had ruled my life”, the girl speculates. “My need for love was so great, I would offer myself to any boy or man who would take me. There was really no love in it, but I believed any kind of touch was a kind of love (54). Thus the initial trauma is compounded by loveless acts of pseudo-healing, which may seem to alleviate the symptoms, but do not heal the sickness.

At the moment at which the protagonist realizes that she is entering a world which will provide the knowledge she needs to face the demons of the past, she admits that “deep down I dreaded knowing what had happened to me and the dread was equal to my urgent desire to learn the truth” (55). This fear of the unknown is an avoidance symptom, an effort to suppress thoughts, feelings or activities associated with the traumatic Real. On the other hand, with their stories of witnessing the three “mighty women” (28), Bush, Dora Rouge, and Agnes jointly conduct the sessions of healing through caring and by “translating” the uncanny for the girl either in the intimate space of home, or in the soothing embrace of open spaces and waterways, that a psychiatrist in the western tradition would perform by himself in the rational, confining solitude of his study. Hogan develops a relational model for dealing with trauma where connectedness between the afflicted person and the healers is of utmost importance, as opposed to the western model where the psychoanalyst is in total control of the healing process. The creation of emotional comfort and the ability to “decipher” the traumatic are basic strategies in Bush’s therapy. Angel’s unwillingness to stay at the new place is broken by Bush’s disarming love and acceptance. “Bush would create a room full of intimacy. I unpacked,” the girl acknowledges. Intimacy then becomes the prime value, the welding element in the relationship between the three women and their charge, and between them and nature during their journey to Hannah’s house. Significantly, as Angel begins to feel more and more at *home* in nature, as she becomes an insider to its secrets, she can locate intimacy in landscape too. Looking at the island of the Fat Eaters, Dora Rouge’s ancestors, the protagonist remarks, “Even from a distance, the island had a feeling of intimacy” (167).

Agnes, on the other hand, with her stories of witnessing takes Angel back on a journey toward her mother and tells her that what happened to her: It “started long ago. It happened at the time of the killing of the wolves” (37) in 1938, when Loretta, Hannah’s mother, arrives at Adam’s Rib,

smelling of cyanide because in order to survive, she ate the corpses of poisoned animals and with no love left in her for when she was still a girl, she had been taken and used by men who fed her and beat her and forced her. That was how one day she became the one who hurts others. It was passed down (39).

Like her mother before her, Hannah is the living embodiment of the “incomprehensibility” of the traumatic Real of historical experience. Bush tells the girl how Hannah walked out of the cold water, “white with shock ... it looked like she was born of storm.” People fear her inhumanity and destructive power and define her sickness as

“soul loss ...a heart of ice” (76). Significantly, Bush identifies Hannah with the island where she lived, with “the frozen waters ... the light and dust of solar storms that love our cold, eerie pole.” (78) Hannah is as deadly as a solar storm that could fry power grids, knock satellites back to Earth, and among other things, cause deadly solar radiation. As Bush testifies,

There were people all along who thought Hannah should have been sent away. Maybe even killed. People believed she was a danger to others. One of her children ate glass and chewed razor blades. We knew what had happened to you, how, like a dog, she bit your face with her teeth” (246).

It seems that a person, especially a mother, who has never experienced love, but seen only destruction and suffered inhuman pain, is not only incapable of love, but has become another instrument of destruction of lives. In giving birth to another life, she sees it only as an extension of her own brutalized, hateful body: hence, the irresistible urge to destroy her own child. Bush, the only one, who driven by her love for Hannah manages “to sing herself into her, to go partially inside her,” sees her as “the meeting place ... her life going backward to where time and history and genocide gather and move like a cloud above the spilled oceans of blood. No one still alive was strong enough to sing the song that would cure her” (101).

The inability of the medicine man and the Christina priest to cure Hannah points to the utter loss of the sacred. The priest defines her as “miracle in reverse,” thus evoking at least one of the miracles that Christ performs on “a man who has been possessed for a long time, wears no clothes, has no home but lives in the graveyard” (Luke 8: 27). As Luke tells us, “Jesus had commanded the unclean spirits to come out of the man. For oftentimes he had caught him; and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he broke the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness” (8:28-30). The pairing of the Christian priest with the Indian medicine man supports Catherine Rainwater’s thesis about the existence of a “balanced pair of narratives and characters,” and “intertextual network of references” in *Solar Storms* (95). Seen from this perspective, the pair symbolizes the seemingly competing discourses of Christian and native knowledge

Like Hannah the man in Luke’s story is a “meeting place” of thousands of demons from different dimensions, for when Jesus asks him, “What is your name,” the demon responds, “Legion.” Like Hannah, the possessed man is a “miracle in reverse,” that is, the Devil’s dark work until he is exorcised by the “Son of God most high.” Like Hannah, he is, as Bush puts it, “a skin that others wore ... a storm looking for a place to rage” (77). Since Christ promises to any of his disciples to have the power to cast demons in his name, we may wonder if the priest even attempted to heal Hannah in teaching her the gospel of love and compassion. Most probably not because like the Bishop who ordered to dynamite the healing mineral waters “to spite the superstitious natives,” in spite of the many instances in the New Testament of healing waters stirred by angels, he does not remember that God’s grace extends equally to believers and non-believers. On the other hand, the heroine cannot yet make the distinction between practices that distort the religious belief and the true message of the teaching of Christ.

In an effort to understand what Hannah is, Agnes recalls “Old stories about the frozen heart of evil that was hunger, envy, and greed, how it had tricked people into death or illness or made them go insane” (13). Once again, the uncanny and surreal are being processed and made sense of through traditional wisdom. When Angel and the two women arrive at Hannah’s place, they learn that Hannah has just died. Unable to conquer the “solar storms” in her soul that had wasted her mind and body, and tortured by dreams of frozen bodies, she begs Eron, the man she is living with, to end her life. Angel is shocked by what she sees and by the realization that her mother “was a cannibal, a cold thing that hated life.” Rather than try to explain reality that defies logical explanation, Dora Rouge tells Angel the story that happened long ago: “there was a woman in the grip of ice. It held her in its blue fingers. It froze her heart” (247). In 1939 there is a similar story of a starving woman who was buried under the snow and ate the frozen bodies of the family who had already died. Two hunters found her and cooked her some hot soup. Yet, “she loved only human flesh” and tried to kill the young hunter. After the two men killed her, “they poured boiling-hot water into her open mouth and her wounds to melt her frozen heart,” since they believe that the spirits do not die with the body and it takes a special ritual to exorcise them. Although the men plead guilty and were sentenced by the white jury, as Bell testifies, they were satisfied, “knowing they had returned the world to a kind of balance” (248). It is only through ritual action that people can perceive the meaning of the messages from the spirit world and translate them for other humans.

In his discussion of the functions of myth and ritual, David Rasmussen reminds us that myth is concerned “not with presenting an objective vision of the world, but with presenting man's true understanding of himself in the world in which he lives” (10). It is this power of myth that is used masterfully and extensively by Bush, Agnes, and Dora Rouge as a means of healing Angel of her trauma, by restoring her into a position of connectedness to other human beings and by giving back her own humanity and sense of dignity. Thus, they exorcise the demon of self-loathing and self-hurting. It is these coded stories, both referencing the traumatic event as a “failed experience” and turning it into an invariant of a myth and making it less threatening, rather than the reconstruction of the event as memory, that gradually provide understanding and the possibility for the fashioning of a meaningful discursive subjectivity.

Hannah’s fate mirrors the fate of the woman, “who slept with winter,” and her story makes sense only through myth. According to Laura Castor, the story “reenacts the Cree and Ojibwe windigo” tales, where “a windigo emerges when a human being indulges self-interest to the point where his or her cravings for food or sex develop into a physical disorder” (169). John Bierhost claims that “the only way to exorcise a windigo’s power was by pouring hot tallow down its throat to melt the frozen heart” (219). Hannah can be accessed only through bits of reconstructed memories of the past events witnessed by the three women. These stories about actual events are “read” through the prism of a paradigmatic story that processes new experience in a ritualistic way. This strategy makes the event less “unspeakable” and “unreal,” and prepares Angel for the encounter with her mother.

On the other hand, the heroine's intimate experience of the pains and violations of the native land help her see the circumstances that turned her mother into a monstrosity. In Angel's mind and heart, the land, her mother, and she herself become one. She laments the land that "was being drilled to see what else could be taken, looted, and mined before the waters covered this little length of earth" (221) and is filled with deep compassion. Respectively, she sees Hannah as "a body under siege, a battleground. But she herself never emerged. The others, with their many voices and ways, were larger than she was ... between all the layers of clothes, her skin was a garment of scars" (99). The daughter is moved from hatred and rage to understanding and grief and lovingly washes her mother's body, "the house of lament and sacrifice that it was" (251). It is this perception of the mother as a scapegoat and the ability to feel compassion for her that save Angel from repeating her mother's fate, cure her of depression, and allow her to grow up. "I was no longer a girl," Angel proclaims. "I was a woman, full and alive. After that, I made up mind to love in whatever ways I could. I would find it in myself to love the woman who had given life to me" (251). The protagonist's self-confidence comes only after she resolves the conflict with her mother. The ability to be compassionate and to love in spite of all odds is a gift acquired in the process of the physical and spiritual journey during which the three women become mentors for the girl and function both as role models and visionaries with the power to heal by turning a traumatic, profane experience into a communal sacred story of a martyred mother. On the other hand, by completing successfully her rite of passage, Angel re-writes the old windigo story and creates its modern counterpart.

Angel's emotional healing and individuation into selfhood have been successfully completed, yet this is but the first step in the journey to selfhood. Significantly, her initiation into selfhood and maturity is marked also by her participation in tribal political activism. The burden of victimhood and depression having been cast off, the protagonist needs to find new venues of defining her identity. Having embraced her Native culture, she is aware that now there are two selves in her that seem to compete with each other. On the one hand, she idealizes Native culture and denounces western culture, yet, on the other hand, like other young native youth, feels strongly attracted to western culture:

At times I longed so much for the world of teenagers," she admits. "I wanted my old life back. I wanted a Big Mac... With Tulik and others gone, I could listen to music as loud as I wanted. Iron Butterfly, Mick Jagger ... That day I stood at the sink and washed dishes, I sang and shook my hips, the music turned up so loud, I could hear it over the clatter of plates and forks (271).

Angel bemoans the coming of electricity for it often requires the building of dams, and commends the tribes that have refused electricity, yet when the radio turns out to be an important tool for the success of their campaign, she realizes she has "never before thought of the radio as a miraculous invention, that a crystal from earth pulled voices out of air and distance" (268). Nothing is black and white, neither fixed in stone, for "Even those who kept the old ways and refused electricity weren't too proud to come and listen to Tulik's radio," to the "Indian Time" program "(269). Naturally, the protagonist exults in her newly found Native heritage and is full of hope when she says, "I felt hope that we

would succeed, that we would be able to protect the earth and her people” (300). It is not clear who she means by “we,” but it is clear that it is the coalition of protesters that has triumphed, and not one particular ethnic group. Yet, although Angel acknowledges the help of people like the owner of the Two Town Post, Mr. Orensen, who she admits “is worried about us,” who makes the post office “open to you and the others,” and who “took up our cause because the injustice was so blatant,” she does not seem to recognize the fact that the Indians would not have succeeded without “the newspapers in the United States and ... cities in Canada,” to whom they smuggled their story, without the support of common people like the waitress who says, “I hope they win. The Indians, I mean” (333). These facts clearly demonstrate that environmental issues can be successfully resolved only with the committed efforts of people from all cultures and backgrounds.

Significantly, the tension between the “two selves” in Angel’s identity narrative is most dramatic in relation to the sacred. She attributes the devastation of land and people to the “darkness of words and ideas, wants and desires” that came “in the guise of lawless man and people who were, as they explained and believed, only doing their jobs” (268), the people who “bow down to an angry god” (344). Yet, we need only remember that it was through the committed efforts of the Church of Christ and other people in the dominant culture who shared the same ideals as the Native Americans that the issue of environmental justice became an important political agenda. On the other hand, from a purely theological perspective, it is the complex God of creation in the Old Testament that reveals himself among other things as justly angry and not Christ. There is hardly any indication in the New Testament that Christ is an angry Lord. His gospel is the one of mercy, repentance, forgiveness and caring, the one that has motivated many ardent believers not only in the dominant culture, but in Christian Indian communities as well, to oppose practices of greed and dispossession, and fight relentlessly for social justice all over the world. Not surprisingly, the meetings of the coalition take place in a church, where “attorneys were offering advice and information” (279). Any attempt to proclaim one religious belief as superior to another or to pursue the issue of “authenticity” can bring only dissent and failure. In respect to Native American cultures, any separatism can lead to what Owens and others define as “the dangers of ethno-tourism,” and to the perception of Native beliefs as fixed in time, incapable of effectively functioning in the modern world (qtd. in Pulitano 94).

For good or bad, we all live in a “global village” now and are collectively responsible for our planet. To represent all white people as a homogeneous group, with the same beliefs and convictions, set on a collision course with the earth, would be committing the same error of stereotyping the Other as mainstream culture has done in respect to marginalized cultures. It’s worth remembering that there has been a very strong tradition in the dominant culture of challenging the values of “the “brave new world,” by recognizing the misogynists’ attitude in troping the new continent as “a Paradise with all her Virgin beauties” (Kolodny 4), where the image of the nurturing mother (the garden) and the bride merge into one. The theme of “the rape of the land,” which is recurrent in Hogan, has already been identified and explored by intellectuals, who identify gender and not just race as primary factors in the ruthless exploitation of land and people, since both racial and gender Otherness are seen as polarities to aggressive male masculinity. The

incestuous “rape of the Mother” was inevitable, since already the first accounts of American landscape are imbued with what Kolodny calls “rhythms of sexual conquest.” From this perspective, it is specific values in patriarchal culture and the need for the construction of clearly recognizable American masculinity, rather than flawed Christian belief, that prompted the ruthless possession and exploitation of the land and its resources.

In spite of this polarized model of Native and Christian discourses in *Solar Storms*, there is an unmistakable desire at the end of the novel for bringing all humankind together in a struggle for the restoration of the sacred connection between the human and the natural world:

we had to believe, true or not, that our belated victory was the end of something. That one fracture we had healed, one crack mended, one piece back in place ... we had thrown an anchor into the future and followed the rope to the end of it, to where we would dream new dreams, new medicines, and one day, once again, remember the sacredness of every living thing (351).

The “new dreams and medicines,” which will bring about a renewed reference for the sacred, clearly affirm the need for building bridges between cultures that will mobilize people who see the future of the planet firmly anchored in the respect of its sanctity and in the restoration of the sacred with all its mysteries and grace. It is a vision of a world where life according to the principles of sacred beliefs, and not the distorted practices of those beliefs, will guarantee not only our survival, but a life of harmony, humanity, and beauty.

In constructing Angel’s journey to mental health and wholeness, Linda Hogan rejects the paradigm of “belated temporality” in the representation of trauma in favor of spatial, relational, and achronological paradigm of reading and home. Reading here is perceived as the act of semiotic interpretation in a heightened state of awareness. According to Shoshana Felman, it is “an access route to discovery,” where “the struggle to become aware can never reach a term,” and the identity narrative is seen as an on going process (14). While the traumatic symptoms of depression and insanity in *Solar Storms* are similar to those described in western trauma theories, the strategies for accessing the hurtful event and the therapy Hogan suggests are of a different nature. Hogan introduces into western discourse on madness and trauma a hybrid identity, inhabiting a liminal, hybrid cultural location. The fragmented self is made whole by drawing from different landscapes, language codes, and sacred knowledge systems, as well as through a new experience of connectedness, both personal and political. Thus, the afflicted protagonist is initiated into the code of reciprocity, which extends to the human and the natural world, and to eternity itself. Significantly, this reciprocity now strives to go beyond Native practices and beliefs to embrace all those who see human beings as guardians of the earth and the struggle for social and environmental justice for all nations and cultures as the road to stability and progress. Indicatively, such struggle can hardly succeed if it is not anchored in the ultimate authority of the sacred and the mystical.

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