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**When All Boundaries Fall Apart:
The Experience of Time in Linda Hogan's *Power* and *Solar Storms***

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The Experience of Time in Linda Hogan's *Power* and *Solar Storms***

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To all Indigenous peoples

EARTH

Wholeheartedly, I thank my parents and sister for providing me with a sustaining ground, in this and all other occasions.

WATER

I thank my friends and the Sangha for reminding me of the fluidity with which apparent obstacles can be overcome.

FIRE

To all Indigenous peoples throughout the world, past and present,
I bow in reverence and gratitude.
Thanks for helping me see, like never before, the incessant flame of life and creation.

AIR

A special thanks to my advisor, Professor Rita,
whose company and words have helped me expand my horizon of knowledge.
Your wisdom is an inspiration.



ABSTRACT


Linda Hogan is a Chickasaw author whose extensive work includes novels, short stories, plays, poetry, and essays. She is also an environmentalist whose activism is built upon a Native understanding of nature and the relations between human and nonhuman beings. This thesis focuses on two of her novels, *Solar Storms* (1995) and *Power* (1998), and explores the healing processes of their protagonists, Angela and Omishto, respectively. In both novels, the characters engage in a movement of abandoning a mainstream American way of being – a way of being highly informed by the ideology of Manifest Destiny – toward a reconnection with their Native ancestry and a tribal apprehension of life and the world. Specifically, this work explores the characters' gradual engagement in what Laguna author Paula Gunn Allen (1992) defines as a *ceremonial time sense*, a particular experience of time that engenders a psychic integration, as opposed to a mechanical, clock-based time sense, which generates fragmentation and enhances a separation between time and space, person and place, nature and culture. This work explores how the characters' movement toward a rich self-recognition as Indians (OWENS, 1994) represents a movement of opening to the motions of the lifeworld, as well as the dissolution of deep-rooted categories such as subject and object, internal self and external world. Furthermore, this thesis examines how a ceremonial time sense is connected to the Plains tribes' conception of a *sacred hoop* – an all-encompassing unity that contains the whole of existence, and in which all movement is related to all other movement.

Key-words: Native American literature, Linda Hogan, *Solar Storms*, *Power*, Native time sense

RESUMO

Linda Hogan é uma autora Chickasaw cuja extensa obra inclui romances, contos, poesia, drama e ensaios. Da mesma forma, ela é uma ambientalista cujo ativismo se baseia em uma compreensão Nativo-Americano da natureza e das relações entre os seres humanos e não-humanos. Focando em dois de seus romances, *Solar Storms* (1995) e *Power* (1998), a presente dissertação explora os processos de cura de suas protagonistas, Angela e Omishito, respectivamente. Em ambos romances, as personagens se engajam em um movimento de abandono do modo de ser Euro-americano – um modo de ser fortemente orientado pela ideologia do Destino Manifesto –, em direção a um reencontro com sua ancestralidade nativa e a uma apreensão tribal da vida e do mundo. Especificamente, esse trabalho explora o gradual engajamento das personagens no que a autora Laguna Paula Gunn Allen (1992) define como um senso de tempo cerimonial – *a ceremonial time sense*: uma experiência temporal particular que engendra uma integração psíquica, e se opõe à experiência cronológica e mecânica do tempo, a qual produz fragmentação no sentido de fortalecer a sensação de separação entre tempo e espaço, pessoa e lugar, natureza e cultura. Esse trabalho analisa como o movimento das personagens em direção a um rico autorreconhecimento enquanto indígenas (OWENS, 1994) representa um movimento de abertura aos fluxos do mundo, bem como um processo de dissolução de categorias fortemente enraizadas, tais quais sujeito e objeto, eu interno e mundo externo. Além disso, a presente dissertação examina de que forma um senso de tempo cerimonial se conecta à noção de *sacred hoop* (Plains tribes) – uma unidade abrangente que abarca a existência como um todo, e na qual todos os movimentos estão conectados e se relacionam entre si.

Palavras-chave: Literatura indígena norte-americana, Linda Hogan, *Solar Storms*, *Power*, Tempo ameríndio



“Ts’its’tsi’nako, Thought-Woman,
is sitting in her room
and whatever she thinks about
appears.

She thought of her sisters,
Nau’ts’ity’I and I’tcts’ity’I,
and together they created the Universe
this world
and the four worlds below.

Thought-Woman, the spider,
named things and
as she named them
they appeared.

She is sitting in her room
thinking of a story now

I’m telling you the story
she is thinking.”

Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony*

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First and foremost, I would like to emphasize that I write as a non-Native willing to learn, understand, and experience the world through the wisdom of Native knowledge.

I write as an outside apprentice desiring to come closer, with an ultimate respect and reverence, to the Native peoples and their ways of apprehending and living the world.

I write as one of the many ones in this multitude of beings made ill by the lack of wisdom, and by the oblivion of our organic connection to the land and all other beings.

I humbly approach their ancient knowledge in the hope that this encounter will bring healing to me and to all those in need, in the hope that the opening of one's eyes will invite and help others to do the same.

May we learn to reconcile and may balance be restored.



Introduction¹

I was an undergraduate student at UFRGS when the first encounter took place. A discipline specially focused on Native American literature was being offered that semester, and I decided to take it, by then completely unaware of the deep connections I would gradually start to develop with this body of knowledge. Working with literature can be truly magical. Even in the academic field, where things are expected to be more objective and formal, literature still has a powerful and transformative effect. As the semester advanced with its readings and discussions, I felt a flame eagerly growing behind my eyes. I felt an earnestness taking shape and becoming captivation, genuine wonder. I was

¹ This thesis was sponsored by Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (CAPES).

discovering a whole new world. To be more precise, I was discovering a new way of being in the world.

In my early twenties I carried the doubts and discomforts typical of this age. I carried uncertainties regarding life and the future; I carried unsettledness and a desire for deep exploration. But I also carried what most of us in this present age carry, what many of us cannot locate, or even realize: I carried the pain of trauma, the all-pervasive pain of division and fragmentation, of separation from nature, of separation from all beings – nonhumans and humans alike –, of separation from ourselves, from what we are, from meaning. I carried the pain of ignorance, the pain of blindness, the pain that only leads to more pain. I needed a way out. We need a way out. All around us, beings in all directions are now suffering, victims of an ongoing destruction. We are suffering, sometimes completely unaware of the deeper reasons why.

In an article² published by *El País* in 2014, Eliane Brum expresses her suspicion about the connection between the high rates of depression and other mental diseases among people in our society nowadays, and what is currently happening to the planet. The consequences of climate change are transforming the ecosystems so dramatically, that we find it hard even to conceive of such gigantic phenomenon. We keep going – taking pills to sleep, to wake up, to work, not to cry, not to feel anxious. For Brum, however, this tremendous discomfort that has come upon us is a sign of mental health, a cry of our very humanity: we should gather the courage to hear our own pain, to embrace this deep suffering and allow its message to come forth. We should not try and sedate this alarm, but rather engage in it with all our efforts toward a most necessary awakening. I share with Brum and so many other contemporary thinkers the belief that this pain within ourselves only attests to the inseparability between us and our surroundings; it enlightens an organic connection – often discredited and overshadowed – between nature and our inner self.

Along with German philosopher Günther Anders, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro³ defends that what we are presently living is an anti-utopic situation. While an utopist is a person who can imagine a better world, but does not know how to bring it about in reality, in anti-utopic circumstances we have the technical possibilities of creating things that we cannot even conceive. He says, for instance, that we can create the atomic bomb, yet do

² BRUM, Eliane. "Antiautoajuda para 2015":

http://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2014/12/22/opinion/1419251053_272392.html (Accessed 04 Mar 2017).

³ Interview with Eduardo Viveiros de Castro and Déborah Danowski:

http://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2014/09/29/opinion/1412000283_365191.html (Accessed 04 Mar 2017).

not know how to use it. The climate change is such an enormous phenomenon, that we are unable to picture it with clarity, and to understand how it affects us in subtle yet profound ways.

Traditional peoples possess a largely rich and varied body of knowledge. Despite the many differences among the numerous Indian cultures throughout the Americas, they are all similar in that they are nature-centered. Their knowledge is a knowledge rooted in the land, in the acknowledgment of the interconnectedness of all things and beings – *all my relations*. It is, therefore, a knowledge based on experience, and it finds its validity and purpose in the maintenance of this connectedness, in a balanced and sustainable manner.

In order to establish a dialogue, however, first it is imperative that we become aware of who are the people who comprise, in reality, the vastly diverse groups of individuals that we address by such labels as Indian Americans, Native Americans, Indigenous peoples, and the likes⁴. In his classical *Killing the White Man's Indian: Reinventing Native Americans at the End of the Twentieth Century* (1996), Fergus Bordewich claims that “[few] other Americans, and perhaps none, have been so reshaped and so crippled by the events of the past, and at the same time so distorted in the national vision by myth and illusion” (p. 30) as the Indians. Throughout his work, he presents and examines the several layers of stereotyped visions that have shaped Euro-Americans’ perception of traditional peoples throughout the centuries. Among the most commonly held views, there is the nineteenth century depiction of the Indian as a barbaric element destined to be conquered by the westward advance of modern civilization – a belief that was synthesized by John Gast’s widely popular painting “American Progress” (1872), in which a white-dressed Columbia leads American settlers from enlightened sunrise toward west, while a group of Indian savages runs away into what remains of darkness. There is also the portrayal, largely disseminated nowadays by the New Age movement, of the Indian as a tragic victim of history, as well as an innocent child of nature. As a result of this movement, Native American spiritual traditions are being appropriated, distorted, and

⁴ In what regards the terminology, I decided to employ the terms “Native American,” “Indian American,” and “Indigenous” interchangeably. Each author with whom I work has her or his own preference – and sometimes none in particular. Furthermore, none of these terms seems to be fully accepted as the most appropriate: the terms “Indian” and “Indigenous” comprise a misnomer inasmuch as they originate from a historic mistake (from Christopher Columbus’s belief that he had reached Asia); and as for “Native American”, it “implies that other people born in the United States are somehow less ‘native’ than, say, a Yaqui immigrant from Mexico or than someone who may be only one-thirty-second Cherokee by the measure of ‘blood quantum’ but who nonetheless meets the criteria for membership in that tribe” (BORDEWICH, 1996, p. 19).

sold by non-Native people, in the same way that their art, jewelry, clothing, weavings, and craft had been appropriated and commodified before (SMITH, 2004, p. 128).



Figure 1: “American Progress,” by John Gast (1872)

With all this in mind, I perform the task of writing this thesis as a ceremony. The purpose of a ceremony is to reinstall balance through the bringing together of broken-off pieces. In a ceremony, we remember the interdependence of all things, that everything in the universe is connected. “The intention of a ceremony is to put a person back together by restructuring the human mind” (HOGAN, 2007, p. 40). In this sense, I hope to engage with the reader in a journey, following the thread of Hogan’s narratives toward new ways of thinking the self and our place in the world. I also hope that this work will contribute to the spreading of a fairer, more complex, and more realistic portrayal of American Indian cultures and knowledge, and their dynamic and vivid persistence up to the present.

In chapter one, I map the central concepts with which I work along the thesis, establishing the theoretical background of the analysis. As Paula Gunn Allen remarks,

Most traditional American Indian literature is not similar to Western literature, because the basic assumptions about the universe and, therefore, the basic reality experienced by tribal peoples and Western peoples are not the same, even at the level of folklore. (ALLEN, 1983, p. 3-4)

Following Allen, I consider of ultimate importance to set the map and present some relevant aspects of Indian thinking and Indian worldview, upon which the literary analysis will be grounded. By reviewing some Native American assumptions and cosmogonic systems, I examine their ritual apprehension of life and the world and the functioning of categories such as time, space, thought, and language.

I also explore the Native conception of nature and its centrality in Native knowledge systems. Gregory Cajete explains that all Indigenous cultures are similar in that they are nature-centered. Native knowledge is based on experience and arises from a deep participation with the motions of nature, which is perceived as a creative center. Thus, understanding that chaos and creativity are actually two manifestations of the same thing, Native science focuses on engagement rather than control, on observation rather than prediction.

Furthermore, I examine the Navajo and Hopi conceptions of thought and speech. According to Gary Witherspoon, thought and speech are attributed with a definite kind of power for the Navajo, whereupon the whole of creation takes place by means of language. The acknowledgment of the creative potential of thought hence constitutes the basis of ritual and lies at the core of Native spiritual traditions.

In relation to time, Allen points out that the traditional tribal concept of time is timelessness, as the concept of space is of multidimensionality; in this ceremonial world, time and space are mythic. Ceremonial time sense “assumes the individual as a moving event shaped by and shaping human and nonhuman surroundings” (ALLEN, 1992, Kindle edition). By designating the ceremonial time sense as “achronicity”, she explains that this experience of time engenders an integration between individual and universe – “the individual and the universe are ‘tight’” (1992, Kindle edition). Ceremonial time knits person and surroundings into one, thus transcending the limits of chronological time and its traumatizing, disease-causing effects. Chronological time is traumatizing insofar as it produces a sense of separation between one and the world, and the corresponding healing

can be found in the process of attaining balance again, of being in harmony with the universe and its motions. The dances and rituals are a rendering of this process, “by which one enters into timelessness – that place where one is whole.” (ALLEN, 1992, Kindle edition).

In chapter two, I begin my explorations through *Solar Storms* (1995) and *Power* (1998), focusing on the protagonists’ personal healing processes and their engagement in a *sensual participation* with nature. Following Angela’s and Omishto’s physical as well as inward journeys, I examine how this movement toward a rich self recognition as Indians engenders a gradual abandonment of a mainstream American way of being and a clock-based experience of time, prompting instead an integrated and holistic perception of the self. Their journeys thus represent the healing of a displacement engendered by colonial imperialism. As Allen suggests,

[T]here is some sort of connection between colonization and chronological time. There is a connection between factories and clocks, and there is a connection between colonial imperialism and factories. There is also a connection between telling Indians tales in chronological sequences and the American tendency to fit the Indians into the slots they have prepared for us. The Indians used to be the only inhabitants of the Americas, but times change. Having perceived us as belonging to history, they are free to emote over us, to re-create us in their history-based understanding, and dismiss our present lives as archaic and irrelevant to the times. (1992, Kindle edition)

Throughout this process of psychic integration and gradual opening, the false boundaries that used to define their experience of the world also subside, along with deep-rooted dualistic oppositions such as mind and body, animate and inanimate, human and nonhuman, and so on. As they engage in an intra-activity with the landscape, the limits between time and space fall apart and they gradually blend together, giving rise to a new kind of awareness.

Moreover, I suggest a possible reading of *Power* through the light of Elaine Jahner’s conception of *event structure* (1979), and I also explore the ceremonial dimension that underlies the narrative. My analysis is grounded on the works of Native American thinkers such as Paula Gunn Allen, Gregory Cajete, and Louis Owens, as well as non-Native authors such as Elizabeth Grosz, Benjamin Whorf, and others.

In chapter three, I broaden the analysis developed in the previous chapter and explore how a Native time sense is connected to an ethically-informed epistemology built around the conception of *ceremonial worlds* (HESTER & CHENEY, 2001). From this perspective arises a notion of responsible truth, a truth that rings true for everybody's well-being, and which is no longer characterized as the correspondence between discourse and a ready-made world beyond discourse.

Based on Tim Ingold's (2011) theorization about the "animic way of being" and the attitude of openness that it entails, I suggest that Ingold's conception of a *meshwork* of relations bears many resemblances to the Plain tribes' idea of a sacred hoop, or a medicine wheel. Both comprise the understanding of an all-encompassing unity in which all movement is related to all other movement, and in which things and beings exist not as individual components, but as the very relations in which they engage (Ingold defines this as *the relational constitution of being*).

1

Opening a Hole in the Sky: A Necessary Emergence

“I want to take that word *emergency* a step further than the meaning it has come to hold for us, for this is not merely a crisis of the mind, but it is a potential act of emergence, of liberation [...]”
Linda Hogan, *Dwellings*

Writing a thesis on Native American literature is incommensurably rewarding – and equally challenging. It is challenging because, as a non-Native exploring the waters of a foreign ocean, I find myself swimming in the depths of wholly unknown cosmologies, wholly unknown ways of appreciating the universe and participating in it. In occasions such as this, there are numerous traps into which one can fall, for the basic reality experienced by tribal peoples and Western peoples is fundamentally different, as pointed out by Laguna author Paula Gunn Allen (1983). When moving between two cosmologies⁵ axiomatically diverse, it is necessary to be constantly aware of the culturally conditioned filters that give shape to our interpretation. As Gary Witherspoon remarks when writing about Navajo language and art, we tend to find a parallel or an affinity between our beliefs and the Other’s practices, thus reducing the estrangement we feel in face of what is unknown. “In the process, however, we miss the affinity between their beliefs and their

⁵ As Tewa author Gregory Cajete explains, “[c]osmology is the contextual foundation for philosophy, a grand guiding story, by nature speculative, in that it tries to explain the universe, its origin, characteristics, and essential nature. A cosmology gives rise to philosophy, values, and action, which in turn form the foundation of a society’s guiding institutions” (2000, p. 58). The author argues that the cosmology that has shaped the evolution of the West – and, therefore, the modern people’s perception of the “real world” – emphasizes the hierarchy of life, dominion over nature, and a transcendent male God. Indigenous cosmologies, however, are essentially inclusive and based on the understanding that all things are related and interdependent. For Cajete, these discrepancies engender a “cosmological clash” between the foundations of Native culture and those of modern society” (2000, p. 53).

practices, and thus remain oblivious to the initial basis on which our understanding of their behavior must be founded” (1977, p. 15). This process establishes a unilateral relatedness, and therefore hinders the possibility of actual communication. For this reason, chapter one is meant as an attempt to establish the proper ground on which our understanding of Native American literature should take its roots. I try to give as much voice as possible to those people actually legitimated to speak of the subject, those people who carry this ancestral knowledge in their blood, their experience, their identity. This is a political statement of paramount necessity in face of a long scholarly tradition that has produced narratives ‘about’ Indian history and Indian knowledge without taking into account the viewpoint of the individuals such narratives intend to portray⁶. I also invite to the discussion selected non-Native authors who have lived with – and/or closely experienced – Native communities, and whose works preserve the centrality of the Indian perspective. The present chapter lays out a basic theoretical background, thus creating the possibilities for the emergence⁷ into this world.

1.1 Nature and Knowledge

In order to engage in a genuine dialogue with a Native American literary work, it is necessary to make use of a particular kind of attention. Indigenous cultures all over the world are similar in that they are nature-centered: all things in nature, be they “animate” or “inanimate,” are alive and sacred and interact with one another in a dynamic and creative dance. Humans are but a part of a greater whole, and as such they must seek to maintain balanced and responsible relationships with all other participants. Gregory Cajete explains that Native peoples practice “a culturally conditioned ‘tuning in’ of the

⁶ See Donald L. Fixico (2009, p. 8): “Too often, studies about American Indians have been produced from the non-Indian point of view. In the history of Indian-white relations, understanding the native perspective or comprehending the Indian point of view can be referred as the three dimensions of constructing new American Indian history (which are basically the First Dimension of general narrative description ‘about’ Indian history, the Second Dimension of historical analysis of the dynamics of Indian-white relations, and the Third Dimension consisting of historical analysis of the Indian point of view).”

⁷ I feel the need to explain my ludic use of the term *emergence* in this instance: throughout Native America, emergence myths are the stories that relate how a specific people first entered this world. In Linda Hogan’s *Power*, for example, the fictitious Taiga people hold it that in the beginning aninga birds opened a hole in the sky through which Panther, the first person, emerged into the world. She was then followed by the first humans, the ancestors of the present-day Panther people.

natural world” (2000, p. 20), which means that they operate on a level of deep connection with nature. “The body feels the subtle forces of nature with a heightened sensitivity. The mind perceives the subtle qualities of a creative natural world with great breath and awareness” (p. 20). Such an acute perception engenders what he calls a *sensual participation* with nature: the person hears, sees, smells, and tastes it with an intense sensitivity. Cajete emphasizes, nevertheless, that this sensual participation is not “supernatural” or “extra-ordinary.” It is actually “an ancient and culturally conditioned response to nature,” (p. 20) and the enactment of a natural capacity of the human mind. Everything is hence perceived as having energy and intelligence, even those things we usually classify as inanimate: rocks, mountains, natural forces, and so on. This is the basis of what is generally addressed by anthropologists as “animism,” a general term that synthesizes the Native way of apprehending the world, and which I choose to avoid along this work due to its ethnocentric bias.⁸

Such a deep and organic participation with the motions of nature lies at the heart of the American Indian ways of knowing. In contrast with the Western tendency to hold propositional knowledge as more valid and true than other kinds of knowledge, knowledge for Native Americans is based on experience. As Brian Yazzie Burkhart explains, propositional knowledge is presented in the form “that something is so.” It can be conveyed through statements or propositions, and is generally thought to have permanence (BURKHART, 2004). In Western thought, this kind of knowledge is held as the “pinnacle of philosophy” (2004, p. 19). It is founded upon abstraction and tends to detach itself from the empirical reality which gave it meaning in the first place. “[T]he origins of things are lost as knowledge increases and general statements are made using syllogisms containing concepts of which we have little knowledge” (DELORIA, 2004, p. 7). Native knowledge, on the other hand, never loses sight of experience and cannot be severed from the specific empirical background that gives it validity and purpose. “Knowledge in experience,” as Burkhart calls it, is a knowledge deeply imbedded in everyday life; it is something “we carry with us,” it “allows us to function in the world, to carry on our daily tasks, to live our lives.” “Whatever we call it, this kind of knowledge is

⁸ “Along with words like ‘primitive,’ ‘ancestor worship,’ and ‘supernatural,’ animism continues to perpetuate a modern prejudice, a disdain, and a projection of inferiority toward the worldview of Indigenous peoples.” (CAJETE, 2000, p. 27)

not improved by adding abstract propositional form and is not capable of being justified in the foundational sense and seems to need no such justification” (BURKHART, 2004, p. 20).

In Linda Hogan’s *Solar Storms* (1995), a fisherman named John Husk tells Angela, the protagonist, about the guilty he feels for having once been forced to give up his values and trap for money. Such a sense of guilty arises from the character’s tribal understanding that there had been an ancient covenant, since time immemorial, between animals and people, which his hunger and need compelled him to violate. Back then, “[t]hey would care for one another.” As a result, his main desire in life became “to prove that the world was alive and that animals felt pain, as if he could make up for being part of the broken contract with animals” (HOGAN, 1995, p. 35). Indian cultures throughout the Americas share this sense of connectedness and interdependence, the belief in an ancient covenant between animals and men that made life both possible and meaningful. Such a connection between the self and *all my relations* is also the ground upon which all Native knowledge is structured. “We must maintain our connectedness, we must maintain our relations, and never abandon them in search of understanding, but rather find understanding *through* them” (BURKHART, 2004, p. 25). Burkhart takes up the mythic figure of the Coyote – described as a philosopher in many American Indian stories –, and Plato’s story of Thales – who tumbled down a well when looking up to study the heavens –, in order to illustrate what an American Indian philosophy is *not*. While Plato uses Thales’ example to show what a philosopher *is* – someone who is unaware of what her/his next-door neighbor is doing, who barely knows whether such a creature is a person at all –, Coyote as the philosopher disengaged from the *here* and *now* is meant as an example of what one should *not* do, of what turns a person away from the quest of knowledge. In the tale presented by Burkhart, Coyote gets himself and others into trouble by guiding his actions solely upon his wants and desires, hence forgetting what is right – the right way to act towards all his relations. What this story presents to us is the *principle of relatedness*: we must learn “never [to] forget the things around us and how we are related to those things” (BURKHART, 2000, p. 16). Since the questions we choose to ask instruct how we act, and this in turn impacts the way the world is, Coyote also teaches us that the questions we pose are more important than any truth we might expect to discover:

The way in which we ask questions (the way in which we act toward our relations) guides us, then, to the right answers, rather than the other way around wherein what is true directs the method of questioning and the

question itself (i.e. we can ask any question we desire in any way we desire, and the answer will remain the same). We can refer to this as the limits of questioning principle. (2000, p. 16)

The second approach, which emphasizes the search for a truth, admits the existence of one or more autonomous truths “out there,” unchangeable and disconnected from us, waiting to be apprehended by our intellectual efforts. From a Native perspective, on the other hand, there is no such thing as a division between individual and world, there is no such conception of a static world made out of hard facts independent of our subject perception. We are constantly interacting and valuing what surrounds us, incessantly participating in the meaning-making of the world. Creation is a constant and multidimensional process that takes place at all levels. There is no static reality out there whatsoever, but as Cajete beautifully highlights, “Native science⁹ embraces the inherent creativity of nature as the foundation for both knowledge and action with regard to ‘seeking life’” (CAJETE, 2000, p. 15). In this point, Native knowledge comes very close to the Buddhist concept of *interdependence*, or the inseparability of subject and object, the creative and empty nature of all phenomena, which are deprived of intrinsic existence and arise from the luminous nature of mind and its capacity for incessant creation¹⁰. Nature is thus seen as a creative center, and Western science has recently come closer to an understanding that has long been held by Indigenous peoples all over the world. As Cajete and several authors point out, with the advent of quantum mechanics, theoretical physicists have begun to acknowledge that the universe has a non-material dimension, “have begun to change their orientation from conviction of an absolute to one of relative truth among many truths and possible orientations and cosmologies” (2000, p. 60).

⁹ Due in part to the empirical nature of Native knowledge, gained by means of direct access and subject experience, there are no efforts toward the conceptualization and classification of knowledge, and Native languages present no word for “science,” nor “philosophy,” “psychology,” and so on. The absence of linguistic forms, however, did not diminish the importance of those things in Native life. As Cajete explains, some scientists and non-scientists argue that the term “Indigenous science” is essentially meaningless, since Indigenous people have folkways and folk knowledge, a knowledge that is not scientific. On the other hand, “[o]thers perceive science as a way of understanding the world, a story of how things happen, a way that human beings have evolved to try and explain and understand existence in time and space and relationships *vis-à-vis* the natural processes of the world. In this perspective, every culture has science” (2000, p. 3).

¹⁰ “When any two components or more come together, a new phenomenon emerges – nails and wood become a table; water and leaves become tea; fear, devotion, and a savior become God. This end product doesn’t have an existence independent of its parts. (...)

[Prince Siddharta] realized that this applies not only to the human experience but to all matter, the entire world, the universe – because everything is interdependent, everything is subject to change. Not one component in all creation exists in an autonomous, permanent, pure state.” (KHYENTSE, 2007, p. 15)

In this sense, Cajete explains that “creativity is both the universe’s ordering principle and process” (2000, p. 15). It takes place in the micro and macro dimensions alike, whereupon human creativity is inserted within this immense continuum. Drawing from chaos theory, the author argues that chaos is the source of all things. Despite the deeply-rooted Western scientific attempt to control and predict nature’s functioning, research on chaos theory has shown that systems are beyond the ability to predict or control, and that all of nature is a chaotic system. Understanding that chaos and creativity are actually two manifestations of the same thing, Native science focuses on engagement rather than control, on observation rather than prediction. Through sensual participation in the flux of chaos, the Native person seeks to find and maintain balance, to become increasingly aware and realign her or himself with other levels of existence.

1.2 The Creative Potential of Thought

The Navajo creation story has it that the world was brought into being by thought. The *Diyin Dine’é* (“Gods,” “supernaturals”) entered the sweathouse and thought the world; then their thoughts were realized through language, in speech, song and prayer:

(...)

Third Verse: The earth will be, from the very
beginning I have thought it.
The mountains will be, from the very
beginning I have thought it.
(and so on)

Fourth Verse: The earth will be, from ancient times
I speak it.
The mountains will be, from ancient times
I speak it.
(and so on)¹¹

The Navajo ontological conception of thought and speech, as Gary Witherspoon (1977) remarks, is essentially different from ours. Thought and speech are attributed with a definite kind of power, whereupon the whole of creation takes place by means of language. The author argues that “[the] form of the world was first conceived in thought, and then this form was projected onto primordial unordered substance through the compulsive

¹¹ “Beginning of the World Song,” translated from the Navajo by Gary Witherspoon (1977).

power of speech and song” (p. 47). In order to achieve *hózhó*, which the author translates as “the positive or ideal environment,” “beauty,” “harmony,” “good,” and which represents the ultimate end toward which all beings strive – including supernaturals and all of nature –, it is fundamental that their inner forms “harmonize and unify with *Sa’ah Naagháii* [thought],” while their outer forms “harmonize and unify with *Bik’eh Hózhó* [speech]” (p. 25). From a Navajo perspective, there is absolutely no separation between a person’s mental activities and the world “outside.” There is rather a continuum, so that thought and speech can actually create and/or alter the way the world is, and vice-versa. Thought and speech are so intricately connected for the Navajo, that speech, as an imposition on the external world, becomes a reinforcement of the power of thought. In Keres theology, likewise, the Creatrix is She Who Thinks, or Thought Woman, one of the names by which she is addressed. There is no time when she did not exist. In the beginning, Thought Woman thinks creation, and then she sings her two dormant sisters – Uretsete and Naotsete – into life. Creation is a collective activity, and Thought Woman instructs her sisters to sing over the items in their baskets, or medicine bundles, in order to give them life. Paula Gunn Allen explains that “at the center of all is Woman, and no thing is sacred [...] without her blessing, her thinking” (ALLEN, 1992, Kindle edition).

... In the beginning Tse che nako, Thought Woman finished everything, thoughts, and the names of all things. She finished also the languages. And then our mothers, Uretsete and Naotsete said they would make names and they would make thoughts. Thus they said. Thus they did. (PURLEY, 1974, p. 29 apud ALLEN, 1992, Kindle edition)

Ceremony and ritual are the foundation of Native spiritual traditions, and of Native ways of life as a whole. Thought and its performative counterpart, speech – song, prayer, storytelling –, constitute the basis of ritual, and by means of proper participation in ritual people can actually impose changes on reality. Witherspoon explains that Navajos associate thought with form, and speech, understood as action, is associated with the transformation of substance (air); “thus, ritual creation and restoration constitute a union of form and substance, or an imposition of form onto substance” (1977, p. 31).

In the beginning of *Solar Storms*, the wife of the protagonist’s grandfather – who had tried and failed to keep her husband’s baby granddaughter with her –, hears the cry of the little girl in her house, even though the baby had been sent by the county to live with her mother, far away. “It was a chilling sound, your soul crying out, and Bush turned

desperate as a caged animal. She fought for you.” (HOGAN, 1995, p. 13). She feels the little girl’s suffering. She feels her despair, her helplessness. Even though Angela, the protagonist, is not there, Bush decides to engage in a battle for her survival and healing. The following pages describe her preparation and enactment of a mourning feast, a ceremony that lasted all night and for which she invited a handful of people from the village. She started by baking the bread and soaked corn in lye and ashes until it became a sweet hominy. A caustic ingredient, the lye surprisingly sweetened and fattened the corn. She also cooked a wild rice that Angela had harvested with her two years earlier – the most important thing. Finally, she opened a jar of swamp tea that smelled like medicine, like healing. Preparation done, people started gathering, and they ate from evening through to near light:

I don’t know how to measure love. Not by cup or bowl, not in distance either, but that’s what rose from the iron pot as steam, that was the food taken into our bodies. It was the holy sacrament of you we ate that day, so don’t think you were never loved. (HOGAN, 1995, p. 16)

When it was finished and people were leaving, Bush gathered all her belongings and distributed them among her guests, in a giveaway. Of all the things they took – which amounted to nearly everything she possessed –, the most important thing they carried was Bush’s sorrow. “It became our own. Some of us have since wanted to give it back to her, but once we felt it we knew it was too large for a single person. After that your [Angela’s] absence sat at every table, occupied every room [...]” (HOGAN, 1995, p. 18).

Bush had sensed the baby’s suffering. Although it is not explicit in the narrative, that moment probably accounted to when Angela was being attacked by her mother, Hannah; an aggression that left her with permanent reminders throughout her body and face, as scars. Hannah is once described by Angela’s great-grandmother in the following words:

Old stories I’d heard from some of the Cree began to play across my mind, 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. In those stories the only thing that could save a soul was to find a way to thaw the person’s heart, to warm it back into water. But we all knew your mother, Hannah Wing, stood at the bottomless passage to an underworld. She was wounded. She was dangerous. And there was no thawing for her heart. (p. 13)

Like her own mother, Hannah Wing carried the trauma of several generations, a trauma that “came down in the milk of the mothers” (p. 40). Before her, Loretta Wing had watched the desperate people of her tribe die. No one knew how she had survived, but she was then taken over by a deep-rooted poison. Both mother and daughter walked a path of destruction, being forced and beaten by several men, getting hurt by many and eventually becoming themselves the ones who hurt others. There was no love left in them, no belief, no conscience. They had long treaded upon a road that had no return. For Angela, however, there was still hope, and Bush knew that. For that reason she arranged the mourning feast: to mourn the little girl’s grief, to mourn for all the children that had been lost to them, taken away. Through the symbolic act of baking bread and corn in lye and ashes, and turning them into a sweet meal shared by everyone, she was cooking love and compassion out of profound pain; and this love was being spread, being planted by all those hearts in Angela’s heart. This love was heat that would thaw the ice, make it water again, make it flow again. The whole of this ceremony – from intention/motivation, to enactment and completion – “has inherent meaning within a broader perspective of relationship to spiritual energy” (CAJETE, 2000, p. 47). Through a unity of purpose in the performance of a series of symbolic acts – which, by their very nature, are processes of *mind* –, the participants impose their will on reality, altering the way things are. Bush’s ceremony clearly presents many of the items listed by Cajete with regard to the creation of ceremonial artifacts, an undertaking that reflects the ritualization of life processes in traditional American Indian societies, and which is itself a ceremony. For that reason, several of the steps listed by the author are common to the creation of Native art as well as to other ceremonial activities. One of the items refers to the “intrinsic well-practiced belief”: “Appropriate will results from a full understanding of the repercussions of undertaking a task and the purpose to be fulfilled [...]” (CAJETE, 2000, p. 50). It encompasses the intention for performing that act and a vigilant attitude toward the maintenance of attention and a constant *will*. Just as the *Diyin Dine’é* and *Thought Woman* created the world out of thought, so did those people around Bush’s table create love and the possibility of healing out of the transformative power of mind. This mourning feast, therefore, comprised the power of thought – or will – to reinstall balance and order, or what the Navajos call by *hózhó*¹².

¹² “The will – the power of thought – can cause *hóchxó* as well as *hózhó*, and one can will misfortune and tragedy onto others through forms of witchcraft.” (WITHERSPOON, 1977, p. 89)

From a Native viewpoint, thought creates reality. The narratives we live by engender the world we inhabit. The dichotomy between inside and outside – or internal self and external world – is thus perceived as a kind of false dualism that leads to ignorance and confusion, and is responsible for taking one away from the right path and the right way to act toward *all my relations*. In an essay from *Dwellings* (2007), Linda Hogan quotes Lynda Sexton and engages with her in the question: “Would the earth or our existence on it be in such peril if we did not harbor such a profound desire for extinction?” (SEXTON apud HOGAN, 2007, p. 94). As the authors point out, the source of the Western ecological crisis is cultural: we are so used to myths (sacred stories) of extinction, that we cannot imagine continuation. I follow Hogan in that we need to engage in a collective imaginative effort to create new stories, new narratives that envision another way of living, one that does not estranges us from nature, but instead highlights the love of land and the “infinite mystery and movement at work in the world.” (p.94)

1.3 Time and Space

The whole edifice of Western philosophy is constructed upon a binary dualist logic, which functions by opposing two terms marked out by rigid boundaries that establish one of them as dominant in relation to the other. Most common examples are: nature and culture, male and female, mind and body, time and space, human and nonhuman, and so on. According to Anne Waters, the ontological structure of the European mindset was directly related to the genocide of America’s Indigenous people. At the time of first contact, “an entire binary dualist worldview of consistently non-equal hierarchical power structures was in place in Eurocentric thinking” (WATERS, 2004, p. 102). This mindset is still at work as the basis of Western thinking, and from this perspective it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to understand the foundational concepts of Indian thought. Most Native American languages, for instance, present no abstract terms for space and time¹³. In fact,

¹³ Benjamin Whorf remarks that the Hopi language contains “no words, grammatical forms, constructions or expressions that refer directly to what we call ‘time,’ or past, present, or future, or to enduring or lasting, or to motion as kinematic rather than dynamic (i.e. as a continuous translation in space and time rather than as an exhibition of dynamic effort in a certain process), or that even refer to space in such a way as to exclude that element of extension or existence that we call ‘time’ [...]. Hence, the Hopi language contains no reference to ‘time,’ either explicit or implicit.” (1956, p. 57-8)

space and time are not apprehended as two separate things, hence the possibility of the “same” event occurring in many places, or in many times. The abstract apprehension of time as an autonomous force (dimension, measure...) with an existence of its own is a process of reification of something that cannot be understood, from a Native viewpoint, apart from the specific empirical conditions that give it meaning and relevance in the first place. The reification of time, however, is inserted within a broader epistemological framework in which knowledge itself has been detached from experience and turned into an object, or a set of objects subject to analytical examination.

The Argentinean anthropologist Rodolfo Kusch claims that we see ourselves as interacting objects in a world with no emptiness – a world that dreads emptiness, in fact. Even our discussions about matters of the inner world take place in a language of external things. When we want to investigate our inner affairs, we talk about libido, conditioned reflexes, conduct, among others. To talk about libido is to talk about energy, a physical-mathematical term; “conditioned reflexes” is a superficial way of translating a living organism into a two-dimensional terminology; and the word “conduct” explicitly supposes an external view (KUSCH, 1976). In short, the author argues that our tendency to undervalue the daily life – that part of life which is not inserted within an external narrative that ascribes a sense of coherence and purpose to our actions – is related to a deep-rooted fear of *just being* (“estar no más”). We inhabit a causal world that invites us to act, transform, and control. In such an organized and functional society, we are constantly moving toward the fulfillment of a series of ends, so that the present is but a road that we ought to travel with as much efficiency and speed as possible in order to be done with this task, and then be able to start the next. We describe ourselves in terms of what we do – our professions, degrees, titles –, of what we like to do when we are not doing the former – our hobbies –, of what we envision ourselves doing in the future, in a way that we believe our self to be the accumulation of a list of activities and labels. Kusch talks about our idea of freedom – the freedom to consider a government good or bad, to suggest modifications, to do things, to go into business – as an external freedom through which we possess things and people, and remain completely unaware of what happens inside ourselves (1976, p. 40). In relation to time, the author defends that this detachment from experience has provoked its paradoxical opening, engendering two different *times*:

Likewise, Alfonso Ortíz states that “none of the pueblos, to the best of my knowledge, has abstract terms for space and time[...].” (ORTÍZ apud FIXICO, 2009, p. 12)

uno finito y pequeño y un tiempo infinito que flota encima. Un tiempo de hombre, sobrellevado subversivamente, en el cual escondemos nuestros episodios menores de nuestra vida cotidiana, con nuestra fe y nuestra amargura, y un tiempo mayor que se nos escurre, pero que nos impone la hora el reloj, o la misma historia que nos cuentan. Es en suma la contradicción entre lo finito y lo infinito[.] (1976, p. 43)¹⁴

The Western mechanical time sense thus presents an inherently quantitative aspect, being closely calibrated by the clock – its most eminent Western exponent. It is measurable, repetitive, linear, and unidirectional. Calculated and commodified, time “is disenchanted to become a succession of irreversible now-points” (HAMMER, 2011, p. 3). Hammer argues that chronological time, as a homogenous resource susceptible to exploitation by rational and calculative behavior, becomes empty and uniform and loses any intrinsic sense of significance. Turned into a commodity by the logic of capitalism, time is seen as a resource that can be accumulated, should not be recklessly spent, must be well managed in order to maximize results¹⁵. The author claims that for the modern consciousness, time and space have turned into something like a container, and as such they can be described in terms of ideal properties indifferent to whatever “fills” them. The transformation into containers that exist apart and independently of their contents separates time and space from person, and gives rise to an estrangement between individual and surroundings – individual and land, and nature.

Exploring the basic differences between a Native sense of time and a Western sense of time is a philosophical, anthropological, but also a political enterprise. Donald Fixico explains that in Indian storytelling, time becomes less important as the characters are brought into life and relive the experience. The past becomes the present, and through the common patterns of the experience they become lessons for the future. “When something happened is not so important as ‘why’ and ‘how’” (FIXICO, 2009, p. 25). Native peoples do not focus as much in the measuring of linear time as in *events*, and the author affirms that

¹⁴ “A time small and finite, and an infinite time that floats above. A time of man, subversively endured, in which we hide the minor episodes of our daily life, with our faith and our bitterness, and a larger time that slips away, which is imposed on us as the hour by the clock, or as the history that we are told. In short, it is the contradiction between the finite and the infinite.” (Translated to English by myself)

¹⁵ “Thus, the rationality of purposive-rational action consists solely in the ability to maximize effectiveness – that is, in identifying and implementing the most effective means to achieve one’s given ends. Beyond the consideration of effectiveness, which is performed by applying technical criteria to a problem or a situation, there can be no other rational estimates of worth. The decision to employ a particular set of means may have all sorts of moral and political consequences, yet these are of no intrinsic relevance to the purposively rational agent. All that she can rationally care about is how well the application of the means will maximize the achievement of her ends.” (HAMMER, 2011, p. 50)

the hands of the white man's clock are felt by the Native person as a rope around the throat, strangling the soul from being free. Curiously, he adds, many mainstream Americans also share this feeling.

Fixico explains that chronological time causes in the Native person an ontological confusion. Quoting Alfonso Ortíz, he says that "it is precisely when time becomes cut up into arbitrarily abstract units (...) that tribal peoples lose all similarity in their time-reckoning customs with those of Western peoples" (ORTÍZ apud FIXICO, 2009, p. 12). For Paula Gunn Allen, the attitude of narrating Indian tales in chronological sequence (in literature) is connected to the American tendency of fitting Indians into the slots they have assigned for them. She claims that the time structuring used in the novel determines which kind of consciousness will be reflected in it – western industrial consciousness or Indian consciousness. Native authors who choose western consciousness usually write easily readable books, but they also "further the stereotyping tendencies of American readers" and make "their version of Indians conform to the version of those who see Indians as dying victims of the white man's world" (ALLEN, 1983, Kindle edition). Besides, she argues that chronological organization supports the belief that the individual is separate from the environment, that the person who controls the events around him is a hero, as well as the conception of an external time operating outside from the internal workings of human and other beings.

A Native ceremonial time sense, on the other hand, "assumes the individual as a moving event shaped by and shaping human and nonhuman surroundings" (ALLEN, 1983, Kindle edition). In contrast with the fragmentation promoted by factory time, ceremonial time engenders a psychic integration, a process that Allen depicts in her poem "Hoop Dancer":

It's hard to enter
circling clockwise and counter
clockwise moving no
regard for time, metrics
irrelevant to this place
where pain is the prime number
and soft stepping feet
praise water from the skies:

I have seen the face of triumph
the winding line stare down all moves
to desecration guts not cut from arms,
fingers joined to minds,

together Sky and Water
 one dancing one
 circle of a thousand turning lines
 beyond the march of gears –
 out of time out of
 time, out
 of time.¹⁶

The poem starts with the sense of disconnectedness of a mechanic time, a time that floats above, into which one cannot enter: an empty circling movement that does not communicate to place, to person. The metrics of the clock fail to apprehend the “prime number,” which is present experience – in this case, pain. Slowly, however, the poem turns to an immersion into ceremonial time – which is the time of event, the time of lived experience –, a time inseparable from place, which engenders a cosmological integration: body joins to mind, Sky and Water dance together as one. Allen explains that this poem renders her understanding “of the process by which one enters into timelessness – that place where one is whole” (ALLEN, 1983, Kindle edition). Achronicity, as she calls it, is the kind of time that knits person and surroundings into one. Dancing amidst whirling hoops is a means of transcending the disease-causing effects of chronological time, engaging in the circling motions of time and space.

Similarly, in *Solar Storms*, as the four women – Angela, Bush, Agnes, and Dora-Rouge – advance in their journey north, the protagonist Angela describes her experience in terms of a rebirth. This rebirth is a liberation, an emergence into a new way of being on earth that communicates to *all my relations* and enhances the organic connection between person and land. All boundaries gradually start to dissolve: engaging in a sensuous participation with nature, her body acquires the fluidity of the waters she swims through, the depth of the roots that penetrate earth and invade her dreams, the openness of the air that feeds her cells and returns to space. Her attachment to self recedes as old memories are unleashed: “I forgot to breathe, swimming as if once again, as before birth, I had a gill slit. In that moment, I remembered being fish. I remembered being oxygen and hydrogen, bird and wolverine” (1995, p. 179). Bush, likewise, starts opening like lilies, “being as uncontained as she had previously been contained by skin, house, island, and water” (p. 176). As they traveled, they entered time “and began to trouble it, to pester it apart or into some kind of change” (p. 168). They died for a new awakening:

¹⁶ ALLEN, Paula Gunn, “Hoop Dancer,” in *Shadow Country*. Los Angeles: University of California and Native American Center, 1982.

The time we'd been teasing apart, unraveled. And now it began to unravel us as we entered a kind of timelessness. Wednesday was the last day we called by name, and truly, we no longer needed time. We were lost from it, and lost in this way, I came alive. It was as if I'd slept for years, and was now awake. (p. 170)

When Angela first arrived at Adam's Rib, the land of her ancestors, she was hoping to discover her past, to find her place in the world. The scars carved over her body and face were the written remnants of a story she was unable to read. She thought the answers to her questions lied in the decoding of these marks, in the unearthing of the sequence of events that made her who she was. Slowly, however, she finds herself loosening the grasp on what she later discovers to be foreign ways of apprehending the universe and the self, and steps out of chronological time – the time that causes in the Native person an ontological confusion – toward what Allen describes as a ceremonial time sense. Living through this new perspective, therefore, she enters a whole new way of being on earth, one that acknowledges the vital intelligence inherent to all things and allows for the perception of “all creatures as relatives [...], as offspring of the Great Mystery, as cocreators, as children of our mother, and as necessary parts of an ordered, balanced, and living whole” (ALLEN, 1992, Kindle edition).

1.4 A Cosmological Turn: The Perspective of Manifestation

After carefully studying and analyzing the Hopi language, Benjamin Whorf concludes that it contains no reference to what we call “time.” He explains that the Hopi have no general notion of a kinematic time, or of time as a “smooth flowing continuum in which everything in the universe proceeds at an equal rate, out of a future, through a present, into a past” (1956, p. 57). While the metaphysics subjacent to our language, thinking and modern culture conceives the universe based upon two foundational cosmic forms, space and time, the Hopi metaphysics – as Whorf calls it – has no such conceptions of a static three-dimensional infinite space and a kinetic one-dimensional flowing time. Instead, Whorf asserts that the two grand cosmic forms underlying the Hopi language and thought would be something approximate to what he calls, using his own terminology, *manifested* and *manifesting*. Although any attempt at truly understanding the structure

and forms of the Hopi language, as well as the worldview underlying it, could only be adequately achieved in the Hopi language itself, the author defends that it is possible to make approximations using our own language and concepts. In my opinion, what can first be gathered from this basic distinction is that, while the fundamental concepts of Western metaphysics unveil an external perspective and a tendency toward objectification – time as an abstraction is viewed as having an intrinsic existence, manifesting itself in a threefold manner as past, present, and future –, the Hopi metaphysics seems to reveal an approach essentially from within, which accounts for phenomena in an integrated manner through the ontological perspective of becoming. When explaining the two categories above mentioned – the *manifested* and the *manifesting* –, the author approximates the manifested to what we understand as pertaining to the realm of the objective, while the manifesting comes closer to what we associate with the subjective. The manifested encompasses “all that is or has been accessible to the senses, the historical physical universe, in fact, with no attempt to distinguish between present and past, but excluding everything that we call future” (1956, p. 59). The manifesting, on the other hand, includes all that we call mental, all that pertains to the mind – or the heart – of people, animals, plants, nature, and the Cosmos itself:

The subjective realm (subjective from our viewpoint, but intensely real and quivering with life, power, and potency to the Hopi) embraces not only our *future* [...], but also all mentality, intellection, and emotion, the essence and typical form of which is the striving of purposeful desire, intelligent in character, toward manifestation [...]. It is the realm of expectancy, of desire and purpose, of vitalizing life, of efficient causes, of thought thinking itself out from an inner realm (the Hopian *heart*) into manifestation. It is in a dynamic state, yet not a state of motion – it is not advancing toward us out of a future, but *already with us* in vital and mental form, and its dynamism is at work in the field of eventuating or manifesting, i.e. evolving without motion from the subjective by degrees to a result which is the objective. (WHORF, 1956, p. 60)

The manifesting and the manifested are intricately connected and cannot be understood separately. I believe it is relatively possible to compare the creative potency of the Hopi manifesting, or subjective, with the power attributed to thought, or *Sa'ah Naagháii*, by the Navajo. The process of manifesting includes, among other things, that which is beginning to emerge into manifestation, the moment of inception, the causal edge of a phenomenon. Whorf designates this verb form by the term *expective*, and argues that the expective, while pertaining to the subjective realm, is closely linked to another

verb form, denominated *inceptive* in his terminology, and which “refers to this edge of manifestation in the reverse way – as belonging to the objective, as the edge at which objectivity is attained” (1956, p. 61). Generally speaking, therefore, the expective is related to the causation side of an action, while the inceptive refers to the cessation and consequent result of such causation. The expective, while belonging to the realm of the manifesting, or subjective, is closely related to mentality, to thought. It is hence possible to say that the manifesting is the birthplace of the manifested; it creates and transforms the objective.

In an attempt at approximating our metaphysical terminology more closely to Hopian terms, Whorf argues that the subjective realm should be understood as the realm of *hope* or *hoping*. The Hopi word *tunátya*, often translated as ‘hope,’ is an axiomatic term that crystallizes in itself “the basic postulates of an unformulated philosophy,” (1956, p. 61) in which is couched the thought of Hopi people and culture. Usually translated as ‘hope,’ this verb is also understood sometimes as ‘thought,’ ‘desire,’ and ‘cause.’ It contains in itself the idea of fermentation toward manifestation, a “mental-causal activity [...] forever pressing upon and into the manifested realm.” (1956, p. 62). This activity is seen by the Hopi people in all directions – in natural processes such as the growing of plants, the forming of clouds and subsequent rain, as well as in communal activities of all sorts. This verb encompasses a very basic and all-pervasive process, comprising a foundational notion in Hopi language and worldview. It reveals the equivalent status of hope, thought, will, and causation for the Hopi, and exposes the creative quality of thought as the source of all manifested phenomena. I believe this idea communicates very closely to the Navajo conception of thought, for whom its power is so vivid that it is hold that “if one thinks of good things and good fortune, good things will happen. If one thinks of bad things, bad fortune will be one’s lot” (WITHERSPOON, 1977, p. 28). In fact, the director and controller of all life and animation is the mind, inasmuch as “[all] movements, events, and conditions are ultimately controlled by the thought of one or more beings” (1977, p. 76).

The conception of thought as the creative center out of which everything emerges seems to be at the roots of all Native traditions. Such a comprehension is fundamental for understanding the functioning and meaning of ceremony and ritual, the basis of tribal life, as well as for getting closer to an understanding of how traditional peoples apprehend the universe and participate in it. In an essay entitled “All my relations,” Linda Hogan describes all the steps of a healing ceremony performed by her and some other

participants. The ceremony begins with speech, with words that construct a personal story and expand to encompass the story of the people, the records of history, the mythic past. Speech, as an extension of thought and an imposition on the external world, weaves prayers and stories meant to reconnect: to bring to life the ties that unite the self and *all my relations*. In addition to this, a series of symbolic acts are performed. The performance of those acts is essentially ritualized, demanding one's complete awareness and a unity of purpose: before the ceremony officially begins, for instance, she ties, alone and in silence, fifty tobacco ties, each of which has a prayer in it. The drumming and singing done by the leader, likewise, are executed with ultimate concentration, so much so that he is described as "going into the drum, going into the center" (HOGAN, 1995, p. 38).

What in Whorf's terminology is associated to the realm of the subjective, or manifesting – thought, hope, will – acquires an intense vitality, "quivering with life and power," and comprises the center of ritual, the very place of creation out of which healing is manifested. Hogan explains that "the intention of a ceremony is to put a person back together by restructuring the human mind" (1995, p. 40). In order to achieve balance again, it is necessary to reestablish connectedness, to "make whole our broken-off pieces of self and world" (1995, p. 40). At the core of ceremony, therefore, is the mental process of *remembering*, and its externalization in speech, through the uttering of the words "All my relations" before and after praying. As Allen explains, the circle of being is not physical, but it is dynamic and alive. The acknowledgement of such dynamic unity is at the center of every ceremony, and it is enacted through the compulsive power of speech, in healing chants, prayers, stories.

In short, I believe it is fundamental to understand that American Indian thought is not structured upon dualistic oppositions¹⁷. The manifesting and the manifested – or subjective and objective –, for instance, do not relate to each other in a binary dualistic manner, but must be apprehended as dynamically connected, mutually emergent, and in constant transformation. This also applies to thought and speech, which are two aspects of the same process, as well as for space and time, internal and external¹⁸. Such a

¹⁷ In relation to good and evil, for example: "It is therefore difficult to understand that in the Navajo interpretation of duality good *is* evil and evil *is* good. [...] The sum total of this inverted duality is neutrality. Things and beings, events and conditions, processes and powers are neither good nor evil, or are potentially both good and evil." (WITHERSPOON, 1977, p. 77)

¹⁸ "[The participants in a ceremony] assume that all reality is internal in some sense, that the dichotomy of the isolate individual versus the 'out there' only appears to exist, and that ceremonial observance can help them transcend this delusion and achieve union with the All Spirit." (ALLEN, 1992, Kindle edition)

comprehension is thus fundamental for understanding the dynamic characteristics of American Indian literature, and I hope to preserve them as the ground for the analysis that will follow in the next chapters.

2

Trajectories of an Awakening: An Exploration through *Solar Storms* and *Power*

2.1 Linda Hogan

Linda Hogan is a Chickasaw author whose extensive work includes novels, short stories, plays, poetry, and essays. She is also an environmentalist whose activism is built upon a Native understanding of nature and the relations between human and nonhuman beings. As she explains in an interview¹⁹, her writings reflect a concern with “human, animal, and plant survival, traditions that are ecologically sound, and indigenous knowledge systems, and how to convey these understandings of the world to a wider readership.” Like other Native American women authors, she “is conscious of the real nature of spirit presence in the world and so includes it as a basic assumption about reality in all of her work (ALLEN, 1992, Kindle edition). Both *Solar Storms* (1995) and *Power* (1998) thus grow out of a root understanding that there is a *terrestrial intelligence* (HOGAN, 2007, p. 11) that lies beyond our human knowing and grasping. Their protagonists engage in physical as well as inward journeys, abandoning a colonized understanding of life and the self towards a reconnection with their Native origins, entering a doorway into the mythical world that unveils the sacredness of everything, the pulsing and never-ending process of creation.

In Hogan’s writings, spirituality and political commitment cannot be understood apart from each other. Allen (1992) explains that Hogan’s politics are deeply connected to her vision, and her vision is a result of her being an Indian. Her works, therefore, are

¹⁹ Available at: <http://www.terrain.org/1999/interviews/linda-hogan/> (Accessed 10 Mar. 2017)

grounded upon her tribal understanding of the interdependence of all beings and the land, and this in turn motivates and informs her political engagement against the devastation of the natural world. Through language, she “strives to break down the culture/nature dichotomy and heal the alienation between the human and nonhuman worlds” (WALTER, 2006, p. 9). In one of her essays she states that the source of the Western ecological crisis is cultural, so that we need to envision new stories, new narratives that would imagine another way, that would highlight the sacred covenant which binds all forms of life together. For Hogan, language *is*. Along with N. Scott Momaday, she sees language as an entity, a living being (HOGAN apud JENSEN, 2004, p. 122). Being an imposition on the external world, speech reinforces the power of thought as the creative center of all reality. Her main purpose is then to find a language that bypasses the mind, going right to the source, to the place where everything comes from. “In that place it is possible for people to have a change of heart, a change of thinking, a change in their way of being and living in the world.” (HOGAN apud JENSEN, 2004, p. 123). This silent space of creation and transformation is where myth takes place.

Native American literature is thus inseparable from the social, historical, and political issues that have shaped Native existence since the time of first contact. On a structural level, there is the very undertaking of creating in the dominant language a discourse that subverts the dominant worldview and ideology. For Hogan, writing in English means dealing with an extremely limited vocabulary range, in the sense that English is a language that has more to do with economics than emotion. There are no words in English for our strongest emotions, and it is also insufficient for talking about wilderness. “In this lack, English has little to express about reverence for the land or the human need for wilderness” (HOGAN apud JENSEN, 2004, p. 123). As a result of this,

[it's] no coincidence that Indian people are under the Department of the Interior along with forests and wildlife. Indians have been called “wild” and seem to represent an unfathomable mystery to Christians and to European colonists. This is because of the connection to land, the recognition that life resides in everything, the understanding indigenous people have of how the forces and cycles of nature work. The fear of wilderness, the fear of indigenous people, and the fear of not having control are all the same fear. (HOGAN apud JENSEN, 2004, p. 123)

2.2 The Novels: Where Fiction and History Overlap

Solar Storms and *Power* are both entirely fictitious works that, however, communicate very closely with actual circumstances and people. In *Solar Storms*, four women characters representing four generations of Indian history engage in a journey to the boundary waters in the Canada-US border in order to fight against the building of dams that would cause a far-reaching disruption of water channels and ecosystems. The events depicted in the novel echo the James Bay Project, a series of hydroelectric stations constructed in 1974 that led to an acrimonious conflict with groups of Crees and Inuit over land rights, lifestyle and environmental issues. Set in the first years of the seventies (1972-1973), the novel also addresses the beginning of the American Indian Movement (AIM) and its participation in the Wounded Knee incident, and the wider revival of Indian spiritual traditions that was gaining momentum in this same period.²⁰

As for *Power*, the novel is about the killing of an endangered species, the Florida panther. Omishto, the 16-year-old first person narrator, witnesses the killing of the animal by a Taiga²¹ woman, Ama Eaton, and is later called to testify both in an American and in a tribal court. The novel distantly echoes an actual episode that took place in 1983, when a Seminole man shot and killed a Florida panther and was then taken to court. The case took four years and he was later acquitted under the argument of religious freedom, even though he was not a member of the Panther Clan – and he probably did not have the right to do that, even religiously. In *Power*, however, Hogan steps away from the actual circumstances of the 1983's case, addressing deep and complex questions of environmental degradation and the ongoing violence against Native peoples and traditions. In the killing of the panther, distinct and sometimes opposing discourses crisscross each other and reveal a complex and multifaceted framework in which easy dualistic oppositions such as

²⁰ “It was a troubling time, with difficult news. The war in Vietnam would soon be over, but the deaths, to everyone’s shock and dismay, were still carried across oceans and land by the invisible waves and particles of air. On a closer front, the American Indian Movement was gaining momentum in the cities. We’d heard a little about the goings-on in Wounded Knee, but we were hungry for more information. We wanted to see and hear more from the young men with braids. They sounded strong as warriors to us. Many of the people in the room admired them, even the older ones, and some had already taken to letting their hair grow and wearing it, once again, in growing-out braids. If the American Indian Movement got little attention on television, the dams and diversions of rivers to the north were even more absent. They were a well-kept secret, passed along only by word of mouth. We would have known nothing about them if not for the young men who canoed from place to place, telling people what had happened.” (HOGAN, 1995, p. 156)

²¹ Taiga is a fictitious twentieth-century Florida tribe to which Omishto, the protagonist, belongs.

modern / traditional, “positive” Native / “negative” Western, and even right / wrong are no longer useful. As Grewe-Volpp (2016) remarks, therefore, the novel suggests “that the spiritual and the material, myth and science, nature and culture, seemingly at odds with each other, must be reconciled in the understanding that they are intricately interwoven and mutually emergent.” (p.223)

2.3 As the Boundaries Fall Apart

Solar Storms begins with a prologue, and the opening paragraph informs the reader that the story to be told is a recollection: “Sometimes now I hear the voice of my great-grandmother, Agnes. It floats toward me like a soft breeze through an open window.” (HOGAN, 1995, p. 11).

Apart from the first paragraph, the rest of the prologue is written in italics, a visual change that marks a shift in the narrator. Although the reader does not know yet whose voice is that which opens the novel, it is possible to infer that the following narrator is Angela’s great-grandmother Agnes, that her words are being remembered, reaching out from the past “like a soft breeze.”

The narrative opens in a tangled manner. People and events are recollected by the first-person narrators as pieces of a puzzle that the reader must slowly put together as the stories flow. “The house is crying,” Agnes says, and she describes the deep cold that freezes the windows, her fear that the house would not withstand it. Bush steps into the narrative carrying an armload of wood, and Agnes’s words are then involved by her black hair, beautiful and soft, and the sweet odor that suddenly fills the air. As she describes Bush’s movements around the house, her words are carried along with memories mostly evoked by physical sensations: at a certain point, for instance, her eyes are caught by the bones floating up in broth “the way a dream rises to the top of sleep” (p. 12), and she remembers how Hannah once entered her dreaming, “not floating upward that way, but crashing through, the way deer break through ice, or a stone falls into water, tumbling down to the bottom” (p. 12). Her words are thus penetrated by Hannah’s frozen waters and she recollects Bush’s struggle with this cold world, how she engaged in a battle for healing and survival – a battle that involved, among other things, the cooking of a mourning feast, which she then describes.

The first chapter presents Angela's return to Adam's Rib, the place where she was born. There is a clear time lapse between the events narrated by Agnes in the prologue and Angela's narration of her journey back to the land of her grandmothers, in chapter one. This temporal gap amounts to the whole extension of Angela's life up to then; it is a blank that represents the blank of her history itself, a broken existence in the struggle for wholeness, for a coherent narrative that would provide her with a sense of identity and belonging:

I had searched with religious fervor to find Agnes Iron, thinking she would help me, would be my salvation, that she would know me and remember all that had fallen away from my own mind, all that had been kept secret by the county workers, that had been contained in their lost records: my story, my life. (HOGAN, 1995, p. 27)

Helen May Dennis (2007) argues that in *Angela*, Hogan creates a narrator who suffers the impact of the policies and practices in force during the fifties and sixties. Along this period, the Government's termination and assimilation policies²² were relocating Indians from reservations to urban centers. And at this time, as well, "social work practice did not involve giving fostered and adopted children any record of their past history" (DENNIS, 2007, p. 85). The author continues and argues that, in this context, fostered and adopted children had their emotional health jeopardized as a result of losing touch with any sense of their own identity. As a consequence of the effects of several generations of stolen children – who were sent to boarding schools or were adopted into non-Native families –, Louis Owens (1994) explains that the attempt at recovering or rearticulating an identity is at the center of the American Indian fiction:

For American Indians, the problem of identity comprehends centuries of colonial and postcolonial displacement, often brutally enforced peripherality, cultural denigration, including especially a harsh privileging of English over tribal languages and systematic oppression by the monocentric "westering" impulse in America. It comprehends the fact that on reservations today, more than 90 percent of Native American children up for adoption are adopted into non-Indian families, an institutionalized "mainstreaming" of Indian children into Euramerica that results in widespread loss of cultural identity as well as a feeling by Indian people that their children are being systematically stolen away. (OWENS, 1994, p. 4-5)

²² See Indian Relocation Act of 1956.

As the author points out, discussing such thing as “the American Indian novel” is a complex task that arouses questions of authority and ethnicity, beginning with the very question of what an Indian is. Quoting Karin I. Blu, he argues that from a white perspective, “blood can be either racially pure or racially polluted.” White blood being the standard of purity, any amount of black blood is considered to pollute it, “so that, in the logical extreme, one drop of Black blood makes an otherwise White [person] black.” When it comes to “Indian blood,” however, the question of identity is more complicated and less clear-cut, since the image of the American Indian has been appropriated, created and re-created, and turned into a product over centuries of colonial attitude by scholars, history, literature, and the film industry. The mainstream idea of what a “real” Indian should be is an invention that “often bears little resemblance to actual, living Native American people” (OWENS, 1994, p. 4).

It is, therefore, out of “this disjuncture between myth and reality” (OWENS, 1994, p. 4) that most American Indian novelists draw the material to produce their art. Authors who identify as Native American engage in a process of reconstruction and cultural recovery, attempting at weaving together through the words of a foreign language – and within the limits of its categories and worldview – an Indian discourse and identity. The narrative thus becomes a kind of vision quest, “with the writing reflecting the journey of its author toward a rich self-recognition as Indian” (OWENS, 1994, p. 25).

In *Solar Storms*, the protagonist Angela is a 17-year-old mixedblood who returns to her birthplace, Adam’s Rib, in search of her mother and her lost history. As she arrives, she re-encounters three generations of grandmothers²³ and the fragmented history of an absent mother whose presence, however, haunts the whole narrative as a lingering shadow of inconceivable violations: “And one day a part of me stepped inside the girl [Hannah] and looked around. [...] Inside were the ruins of humans.” (HOGAN, 1995, p. 103).

In the beginning of the narrative Angela appears as a shy, self-conscious teenager constantly trying to hide herself, to cover a scar-marked face behind her fire red hair. She had spent most of her life moving from one foster home to another, always alone, always sheltered from the establishment of authentic human ties. Cut-off from her own past, she substitutes it for a made-up story that tells of a radiant birth out of a loving, caring mother, and which is illustrated by baby pictures found in a twenty-five-cent Take Your Own

²³ Her grandfather’s wife, Bush; her great-grandmother, Agnes; and Agnes’s mother, Dora-Rouge (See Angela’s family tree in Annex 1).

Photo machine, “pictures left behind by someone else.” (p. 71). As well as other protagonists in novels by Native American authors, Angela is “like the schizophrenic who suffers from ‘a breakdown in the signifying chain of meaning’ and who lives incoherently amidst ‘a rubble of distinct and unrelated signifiers’” (OWENS, 1994, p. 150). The novel, therefore, depicts Angela’s process of transformation “back toward an Indian identity and away from the collective dream of white America” (OWENS, 1994, p. 22), a dream structured upon the notion of “Manifest Destiny.”

Describing her first hours back at Adam’s Rib, Angela says:

My return was uneventful, dull and common. And, unknown to me, it was my first step into a silence, into what I feared. I could have turned back. I wanted to. But I felt that I was at the end of something. Not just my fear and anger, not even forgetfulness, but at the end of a way of living in the world. I was at the end of my life in one America, and a secret part of me knew this end was also a beginning, as if something had shifted right then and there, turned over in me. It was a felt thing, that I was traveling toward myself like rain falling into a lake [...] (HOGAN, 1995, p. 26)

Angela is swallowed by this process integrally. Her whole person is engaged in a spiral rebirth that reconnects her with a Native existence, and yet points to the future as an ongoing process of creation, of becoming – as the offspring of the Great Mystery. At first, leaving the white America way of being behind means leaving her made-up stories, her made-up identities behind. It means diving into herself and allowing for skin, walls, mirrors, and all boundaries that separate inside and outside to fall apart. She engages in an opening process of letting go of her old protections – “At times I felt the old fear return, the need to shed skin, to leave everything behind and run, to keep these women out of my skin” (p. 43) –, of tearing apart the wall of fear and anger that separates herself and the world. One of the first important experiences she has in this path of gradual opening happens in chapter two, when a group of people from the village is gathered at Agnes’s and Dora-Rouge’s home for supper. Later that night, the women retreat to the living room and join in conversation about the “deepest things, the most meaningful of subjects, about love and tragedy” (p. 51). The evening is flowing fine and warmly for Angela, until one of the characters – Frenchie – pushes a plate of cookies toward her and asks: “What happened to your face, anyway, dear?” (p. 51). It was the forbidden question, the question no one had asked in a long time, the question that might float unpronounced in the atmosphere, but that should never be allowed to take shape in words, let alone to be said straight out in Frenchie’s careless tone. It takes Angela guards down and she freezes in time. She feels her

heart racing with fear and the color draining from her face. She says nothing. Trying to hide her feelings, she takes a knife to cut the cheese and ends up wounding herself. Then she is taken by Agnes to the washroom while a hurricane of recollections engulfs her – “the memory of wounds, the days and weeks in hospitals, the bandages across my face, the surgeries” (p. 52). She suddenly raises her face and sees herself reflected in the mirror and, without warning, hits the glass with her hand and breaks it:

I heard a voice yelling “Damn it!” and it was me, my own voice, raging and hurt. There was an anger in it, a deep pain, and the smell of hospitals of the past, the grafts that left my thigh gouged, the skin stolen from there to put my face back together. That was all part of it, of what lay broken and sharp in the sink and on the floor. (p. 52)

After this incident, Angela cries for the first time – “Me, the girl who never cried” (p. 53). This moment accounts for the beginning of her healing process: “she is pushed by the emergence of submerged memories to an expression of grief that allows healing to begin” (ARNOLD, 2007, p. 96). The destruction of the mirror accounts for the destruction of her own reflection, “collapsing the gap between her internal self and external image, between signifier and signified” (ARNOLD, 2007, p. 96). It triggers a process of reversal of the “self objectification [that] initiates the emergence from the Imaginary – the presemiotic realm of identification with images in which there is no sense of a unitary self” (ARNOLD, 1995, p. 86), in Lacanian terms. Later that same night, Angela goes to sleep and dreams that she “fell over the edge of land, fell out of order and knowing into a world dark and primal, seething, and alive as creation, like the beginning of life.” (p. 54). She recognizes herself as “water going back to itself” (p. 55), and starts experiencing the world from a perspective that transcends the limiting boundaries of skin, of a unitary self separated from nature. It is a growth process in the sense that “[growth] comes from removing and removing, ceasing, undoing, and letting ourselves drop down or even fall into the core of our living being” (HOGAN apud JENSEN, 2004, p. 129).

In an essay from *Dwellings*, Linda Hogan mentions Octavio Paz and affirms that “in older traditions an object and its name were not separated” (HOGAN, 2007, p. 51). She continues and argues that in mythic time there was no separation between language and the things it named – between signifier and signified, in other words. This rupture occurs not only in language, but extends itself to the separation between person and place, or culture and nature. As a consequence of this broken connection, “the balance between

inner and outer self struggles to maintain itself in other and more complex ways than in the past.” And “as the wilderness has disappeared outside of us, it has gone to live inside the human mind” (HOGAN, 2007, p. 52). For Hogan, the ecological destruction is accompanied by a spiritual fragmentation, so that we have gradually lost the ability to listen to the voices of the world and to communicate with it in a more direct manner. While this rupture has primarily taken place in language, in the separation between word and what it names, Hogan believes that language itself can be the medium through which healing will be attained:

What we really are searching for is a language that heals this relationship, one that takes the side of the amazing and fragile life on our life-giving earth. A language that knows the corn, and the one that corn knows, a language that takes hold of the mystery of what’s around us and offers it back to us, full of awe and wonder. It is a language of creation, of divine fire, a language that goes beyond the strict borders of scientific inquiry and right into the heart of mystery itself. (HOGAN, 2007, p. 60)

In this sense, Angela’s journey is a journey toward the learning of a new language, a tongue “that speaks with reverence for life” (HOGAN, 2007, p. 60), and which is shared by all animals – non-humans and humans –, by plants, by water, by wind: “It was this same desire in me, this same longing for creation, and Bush’s spare words were creation itself. I had been empty space, and now I was finding a language, a story, to shape myself by.” (HOGAN, 1995, p. 94). By living with Bush in Fur Island, by sharing her silences, by listening to the few words that speak of a history inseparable from the history of land, by watching her work of putting together – assembling bones, sewing cloth, weaving words into stories –, Angela partakes of “sacred meal” and is herself assembled together. Stepping onto Fur Island, her made-up stories are dropped one after another in order for a new creation to take place out of the newly exposed mud. Her first impressions of Bush take shape in the following words:

“What had been covered by water not long before was now mud. Bush stood barefoot in that dark, newly exposed clay, as if she’d just been created by one of the gods who made us out of earth, as if she’d risen up like first woman, still and awed by the creation. [...] It was only a glimpse – that’s all I can say with words – that there was something about her that knew itself. (p. 67)

In several instances, Angela’s descriptions of Bush allude to the mythic figure of Spider Woman, “the Eldest God, the one who Remembers and Re-members” (ALLEN, 1992,

Kindle edition). As Allen remarks, “this spirit, this power of intelligence, has many names and many emblems.” (1992, Kindle edition). Keres creatrix Thought Woman, Hopi genatrix Hard Beings Woman, as well as several other Spirit Woman Beings, all “lived in the beginning in an island which was the only land there was” (ALLEN, 1992, Kindle edition). In Hopi theology, it is said that earth and all creatures were born out of the meeting of woman – Hard Beings Woman – and water. Likewise, Angela states that Bush had been claimed by the world of water. She is the sole human inhabitant of Fur Island, “a place of undone, unfinished things and incomplete creations” (HOGAN, 1995a, p. 68). It is a place shaped by several layers of history; it had once been a rich, fertile soil populated by a large concentration of animals, it later became a meeting place of traders who came after beavers’ and other animals’ furs, it had also been home to the two wolf children, who had been raised by a pack of wolves and were later captured by white civilized men, not surviving in their alien habitat. Fur Island is described as a place of immense beauty where creation is incessantly happening and where the “powerful song and radiant movement” (ALLEN, 1992, Kindle edition) of Old Spider Woman pervade everything.

Bush is often portrayed by Angela as having a goddess-like quality, as the one who creates, who brings to life: “as God had done in one day, Bush created light” (p. 73), “Bush became something else, something nearly invisible and silent, as if she were a kind of goddess with a beautiful song and Levi’s and graying hair” (p. 75), “Bush’s spare words were creation itself” (p. 94). She spends a great amount of her time assembling animals’ bones together in order to help their souls: “When I put them together, I respect them,” she said. ‘I feed them and consider their skills. I think of their intelligence.’” (p. 95). Like Thought Woman, characterized as the mother of the goddess-sisters Uretsete and Naotsete, Bush is a mother in the sense that she gives a sacred or ritual birth to the animals whose bones she re-assembles. Thought Woman does not create through copulation; she creates through thought and speech. She thinks and sings the dormant goddesses to life, and then instructs them to sing over the items in their medicine bundles. Likewise, Bush’s work is a ritualized process of thinking – of their intelligence, their skills – and giving these creatures a ritual birth, in order to compensate for their stolen lives, for the breaking of the covenant that used to bind people and animals together.

Bush’s resemblance to Thought Woman is not restricted to her work with animals’ bones; she is a major element in Angela’s process of re-membering as well. Having initiated her process of overcoming the separation between signifier and signified, internal

self and external image, as soon as she arrives at Adam's Rib, Angela moves to Fur Island and steps into a primal world, seething with life, in which she feels, however, like an intruder – awkward and unwanted in its quietness. She moves to Bush's house, which she comes to call the House of No: there were no curtains, no walls separating kitchen and living area, no mirrors, no electricity. "It was defined by what wasn't there" (p. 69). In such a place, Angela's old protections, her most subtle boundaries are bit by bit compelled to fall apart – a process that can be deeply challenging and even painful at times. The world with its unbounded aliveness, its darkness, and its wilderness starts invading her in the very first night:

"One of the vines came through the window like a dark green hand. The first thing I did was to put it out and close the uncurtained window. I did not want the world to sneak in on me. Like the missionaries, I was threatened by its life and the way it resisted human efforts to control." (p. 70-71)

Before allowing herself to open for Bush, therefore, she watches her working from a distance, spying on her, getting to know her "before I had to give her any part of myself or take anything from her" (p. 71). Her days with Bush are described as the "days of my remembering" (p. 71). Their movement, therefore, is a movement of giving up, letting go, on the one side, and receiving, allowing for re-creation, on the other. Entering such a profound darkness, a wilderness she had never known before, her illusions begin to drop away. She begins to feel she "was nothing more than emptiness covered with skin" (p. 74). She senses Bush's subtle activity of taking apart and reweaving, and she knows her past is about to be dismantled. Thus, she speaks her made-up story for the last time that night and then lets it fade away, together with "the presence of the child spirit that had come to stand beside Bush's bed the morning I'd arrived at Adam's Rib on the ferry" (p. 75).

As she watches the giant turtle beginning to come together, looking whole and alive amidst the storm, "a pale turtle wanting to swim in the falling sea of a wet darkness" (p. 78), Angela starts to allow her window to be wide open to the rain. In a stormy night, she lived inside water: "there was no separation between us" (p. 78). And she begins to enter this world with its dark roots, its instinctual light and full sky, so that in chapter six, she can finally understand Dora-Rouge's description of the world as "a dense soup of love, creation all around us, full and intelligent" (p. 81). She gradually learns to see the aliveness in everything, in the stones, the stinging nettles, the snails, the trees. She opens herself to

the creative quality of the world, as a place with no boundaries, in constant movement and transformation. Just like Spider Woman, Bush gives Angela a ritual birth, calling her into life through language – through her spare words that told of Hannah’s story, the people’s stories, the land’s stories – as well as through her long, heavy silences that allow darkness to penetrate, that allow earth to invade Angela’s dreams, taking her all the way back to the origins through a process of remembering. As Hogan states in an essay from *Dwellings* about the people who grow out of the land, inside Bush “there is an understanding of it, a remembering all the way back to the origins, to when the gods first shaped humans out of clay, back to when animals could speak with people” (2007, p. 80), and she passes this understanding forward to Angela, calling her into being through “acts of interior consciousness” (2007, p. 81).

Along the novel, Angela engages in a sensual participation with nature. She begins to hear, see, smell, and taste it with an intense sensitivity. As Cajete puts it, “[t]he body feels the subtle forces of nature with a heightened sensitivity. The mind perceives the subtle qualities of a creative natural world with great breath and awareness” (2000, p. 20). She not only observes nature, but participates with it in all of her sensual being. She gives up on all surfaces, as she explains, and her vision shifts, so that she begins to see deeper – deeper into people’s eyes all the way to their souls, and deeper through the taunt skin of water as well: “I began to see inside water, until one day my vision shifted and I could even see the fish on the bottom, as if I was a heron, standing in the shallows with a sharp, hungry eye.” (HOGAN, 1995, p. 85). Angela’s experience of the world is described in a way that communicates very closely with important concepts developed by new materialist thinkers. Her encounters with other beings and her surroundings, with materiality itself, can be understood through what Karen Barad’s speaks of as “intra-activity,” “which means that things become what they are in their encounter with other assemblages or groupings, i.e., that there is nothing that precedes their relations, whereas ‘inter-action’ presumes the existence of things prior to their assemblage” (GREWE-VOLPP, 2016, p. 216). Nature is not seen as a passive and external element waiting to be shaped by human action and discourse, but rather as an active participant, its vitality explicit in its inherent creative quality. From a new materialist perspective, an “important characteristic of the vitality of matter is that elements never act alone or in isolation (just as human beings never exist in their own separate spheres), but in cooperation with other elements” (GREWE-VOLPP, 2016, p. 216). In this sense, Hogan’s writing presents nature as an actant: a non-subjective,

impersonal source of action that “does” things in its encounters with other actants and brings about change. Events, therefore, do not emerge as a result of hierarchical relations between a passive and an active element, the latter being the only source of agency and intentionality in the case of the traditional nature/culture dichotomy. Rather, events are co-created by all elements involved, human and nonhuman, all of which act as agents with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own.

Angela begins to perceive the inherent aliveness of the world, the interdependence of all beings within a sacred whole, thus participating with the natural creative process of nature: “Floating, I looked down from above and had no sense of what world was there except that it was alive, immense, and it took us in.” (p. 159). As Cajete explains,

This practiced ability to enter into a heightened sense of awareness of the natural world allows the Indigenous physicist intimate understanding of the processes of nature, and forms the foundation for respecting the compacts of mutual reciprocal responsibility shared with other inhabitants of one’s environment. (2000, p. 20-21)

In this sense, Angela learns that the lives of all creatures are connected and that “as we experience the world, so we are also experienced by the world” (CAJETE, 2000, p. 20). This becomes clear to her, for instance, when she agrees to go fishing with LaRue, a mixedblood Dakota and a dealer of bones, hides, pinned butterflies. LaRue tries to teach her hiding techniques such as wearing camouflaged accessories and keeping silent so that the fish would not perceive their presence. In his understanding, animals are not intelligent and they are not capable of feeling pain. His disregard for their lives is explicit: in order to keep two northern pike caught by Angela fresh, he puts them on lines and pulls them, thrashing, through the water alongside the boat, dismissing Angela’s pleas for him to kill them and finish their suffering. He then places the animals on rocks and cuts the skin off them while they are still alive. Angela gets desperate at his disrespect, his insensitiveness, and although she had never lived among other natives, she knows more about fish, about their spirit than LaRue, and she is also the only one to catch them. As soon as the fish are killed, a storm moves in and a lightning almost strikes him: “I knew the lightning sought him out. I moved away from him” (p. 84). In contradistinction with LaRue’s strategies, Bush teaches Angela another way of fishing, explaining that there are proper ways of approaching animals and that one should never forget interdependence and the right way to act toward all our relations. This time, Angela does not even need bait

or any equipment at all, for her newly accomplished skill of seeing through water allows her to find the fish solely with her eyes. Through thought and an appropriate will, Bush and Angela enhance the connection between them and the animals they are catching, considering their intelligence, their skills, their sacredness: “We treated the fish well. We respected their lives and their deaths. We put them out of their pain as soon as they were caught.” (HOGAN, 1995, p. 85). They are able, therefore, to apprehend the greater web of interdependence and strengthen balance through the power of thought, hope, will to generate love and compassion.

2.4 Pestering Time Apart: Actualization and Manifestation in *Solar Storms*

Through the exploration of Angela’s personal healing process, Hogan seeks to enhance, in and through language, a broader process of healing the gaps that separate person/culture from place/nature and give rise to an abstract understanding of time, as detached from the internal workings of humans and other beings. In an essay from *Becomings: Explorations in Time, Memory, and Futures* (1999), Elizabeth Grosz explores the notion of time in its fundamental openness to futurity, rescuing it from traditional understandings that reduce time to the workings of causality, and emphasizing instead its force of becoming. She argues that

Time is a mode of stretching, protraction, which provides the very conditions of becoming, however faltering they may be. Time is the hiccupping that expands itself, encompassing past and present into a kind of simultaneity. Both exist; they concur “at the same time.” But they do not exist in the same order: they function, not in terms of the possible/real relation but, as Deleuze suggests, in terms of the relations between actual and virtual. Matter and the present are to be placed on the side of the actual; and mind or duration and the past, on the side of the virtual. (GROSZ, 1999, p.25)

She explains that the process of actualization is inherently creative and innovative; it is the production of singularity or individuation. While the possible/real relation is regulated by resemblance and limitation²⁴, the process of actualization is governed by the two principles of difference and creation. In contrast with the linearity and

²⁴ “The real exists in a relation of resemblance to the possible, functioning as its exact image, to which the category of existence or reality is simply added. In other words, the real and the possible are conceptually identical (since, as Kant argued, existence is not a quality or attribute).” (GROSZ, 1999, p.25)

unidirectionality that characterize the movement of realization, actualization involves the creation of heterogeneous terms: “The lines of actualization of virtuality are divergent, creating multiplicities, the varieties that constitute creative evolution.” (p. 27). Individuation, therefore, “contains the ‘ingredients’ of individuality without in any way planning or preparing for it” (p. 27); it is a series of processes that are not restricted to the human, characterizing all natural processes such as cloud formation, the formation of crystals, ocean currents, and so on.

I believe it is possible to say that the movement of actualization resembles, in some aspects, the idea contained in the Hopi word *tunátya* – which Benjamin Whorf translates as ‘hope,’ ‘thought,’ ‘desire,’ ‘cause’ – as well as the broader process of manifestation through which the Hopi make sense of the world. Whorf explains that the manifesting is the source of the manifested, and it encompasses all that we call subjective – all that pertains to the mind in a broad sense, not only of people, but also of animals, plants, and things. The manifested comprises “all that is or has been accessible to the senses, the historical physical universe, in fact, with no attempt to distinguish between present and past, but excluding everything that we call future.” (WHORF, 1956, p.59). It seems to me that it is possible to approximate the realm of the manifesting with that of the virtual, in the sense that both are related to the mind and function as the creative source out of which manifestation or actuality are attained. It is also possible to establish parallels between the manifested and the actual: they are both associated with materiality, the physical universe, comprising the result of an open-ended process that is governed by difference and creation. In the movement of manifestation, just as in that of actualization, the manifested is not identical to the manifesting – it is not a possibility to which existence was added. It is, instead, the culmination of an unfolding process of differentiation that produces multiplicities:

From each subjective axis, which may be thought of as more or less vertical and like the growth-axis of a plant, extends the objective realm in every physical direction, though these directions are typified more especially by the horizontal plane and its four cardinal points. (WHORF, 1956, p.62)

In *Solar Storms*, as Angela and her grandmothers travel north, nature and the whole cosmos are experienced by them in their intrinsic dynamism and creativity. The boundaries of a linear, causal time fall apart as they engage in a creative participation with nature. Everything is hence perceived in its inherent aliveness. The thread of time unravels

and as it does, they enter it, pester it apart, and engage in a process of merging with the landscape:

The time we'd been teasing apart, unraveled. And now it began to unravel us as we entered a kind of timelessness. [...] It was as if I'd slept for years, and was now awake. The others felt it, too. Cell by cell, all of us were taken in by water and by land, swallowed a little at a time. What we'd thought of as our lives and being on earth was gone, and now the world was made up of pathways of its own invention. We were only one of the many dreams of earth. (HOGAN, 1995, p. 170)

Time is hence experienced in its openness to the new, and it is inscribed on matter. Through Grosz's explorations, she approaches time from the perspective of duration. She argues that "there is one and only one time, but there are also numerous times: a duration for each thing or movement, which melds with a global or collective time" (p.17). The concept of duration implies the inscription of time on materiality, as well as an understanding of time as movement and transformation. This idea echoes what several Native authors²⁵ point out when describing an "Indian time sense" and the inseparability of place and time. In Hogan's portrayal of the women's journey, past and present merge in the 'presentness' of experience and become manifest in the materiality of the landscape, in the characters' sensual participation with nature:

Near one island, we paddled through strands of spider silk, the paths and creations of other lives reaching out from themselves, drifting sheer behind us, and stuck to our clothing and boats as if we were carrying away the threads of what we were leaving, or unraveling some fabric of the past. (HOGAN, 1995, p.166)

This sensual participation prompts the re-surfacing of the old language through which humans communicated with land; time unravels, and as it does Angela approaches "a place inside the human that spoke with land, that entered dreaming, in the way that people in the north found direction in their dreams" (p.170). In the following paragraph, she says that as soon as she left time, plants began to cross her restless sleep in abundance. In this way, she came to discover herself as a plant dreamer, just like Dora-Rouge. She

²⁵ See, for example, Viola Cordova (2007): "Time is merely a measure of motion: of the motion of the sun, stars, and moon through sky, of changes that are visible and can be predicted." She discusses about the openness of "Indian time" to futurity in the sense that time can be thought of as "a ball to which one slowly adds a layer; each layer is a 'present' that is laid over a steadily growing 'past' that supports the present. There is no preexistent 'future' into which one moves. Many Native American groups portray themselves as active participants in the making of the present – we are, in effect, 'cocreators' with a natural process in constructing the future." (p. 118)

came to remember things she had forgotten: the taking up of minerals from dark ground, the magnitude of thickets and brush, “how a hundred years ago, leaves reached toward sunlight, plants bent into currents of water” (p.171). Throughout their travel, the elements of landscape come alive and it becomes almost an entity. Nature is “‘the earth other as a centre of agency or intentionality’ that actively participates in the relationship between humans and non-humans” (GREWE-VOLPP, 2016, p.214). Its agentic power is heightened and it becomes something like a character, directly participating in the women’s experience: “The Se Nay yelled out in a voice so loud, nothing could be heard above it. ‘It’s angry,’ said Dora-Rouge.” (p. 192). The Se Nay is the river that the four women encounter at the end of their journey, a river that now bears the volume of two as a result of the diversions of water channels for the construction of the dams. Its waters are turbulent and aggressive, but they must cross it to arrive at their destiny. In order for this to be possible, Dora-Rouge talks to the river and asks for its permission and help. Their traversing is difficult, but they succeed in the end. In this instance and throughout the whole chapter, therefore, nature is perceived as an entity – or several entities – with a will of its own. Matter comes to life and unveils a multiplicity of other worlds.

2.5 The Experience of Event in *Power*

In an essay from 1979, Elaine Jahner affirms that literary works of Native American writers require of the reader a particular kind of attention. As she explains, “perhaps one way of describing the magnetic field of attention is to say that the loadstone in this field is the experience of event rather than sequentially motivated action as the determinant of plot coherence” (JAHNER, 1979, p. 37). She defines events as boundary experiences marking stages of life for the protagonist – in the case of Silko’s novel *Ceremony* (1977). Event is here regarded as “primary human experiences that are at one and the same time acts of recognition and experiences of renewal of energies” (p. 38). In other words, event comprises, on the one hand, recognition of the mythic pattern, “form that is enduring yet specific as to time and place” (p. 38), and on the other hand, “conscious participation in the dynamic energies that generate and perpetuate life and form” (p. 38). It is both convergence – convergence of past understandings of the meaning of experiences – and emergence into a new level of experiencing one’s role in an all-encompassing framework.

In this regard, I believe it is possible to say that *Solar Storms* and *Power* also give event structure priority over temporal structure.²⁶ The journeys of both Angela and Omishto are journeys from entangled views – entanglement within alien ways of knowing – toward disentanglement, toward clear awareness and a new level of comprehension, one that allows them to apprehend the mythic pattern and the right boundaries whence derived. Omishto’s entanglement within foreign ways of knowing leaves her in a liminal position, for she states to herself that she believes in one thing – in what is taught at school – and yet cannot get away with the feeling that there is more to the world than that. In chapter two, she affirms that what separates Ama Eaton and herself is the fact that she doesn’t believe in magic. “I don’t believe because at school I learn there is a reason for everything” (HOGAN, 1998, p. 13), and as smart as Ama is she never went to high school and “still swears by old-time beliefs” (p. 13). And yet, when Ama asks her if she believes Abraham Swallow was killed by magic, she feels like she is lying by giving a negative answer:

That’s all I say, and then we are done with it, done talking about it even though she looks at me sideways to see if I’m lying and it makes me feel like I am, but I’m not a person who believes the way she does, because it’s a different world what with the houses and highways. (HOGAN, 1998, p. 13)

Ama is also a liminal character in the sense that even though she is a woman of the land and is deeply connected to the old traditions, she chose not to live with the old people at Killi Swamp, who keep themselves completely apart from the rest of the world. She knows that the old ways are not enough to get people through the present times. The world has changed – as it is constantly changing – and in order to deal with it as it currently is it is necessary to adapt: “new forces have become active so that the rituals must be changed” (GREWE-VOLPP, 2016, p. 222). As Omishto points out, “[it] has always been Ama’s skill to live with the world and not against it” (HOGAN, 1998, p. 47), so that she lives halfway between the ancient world and the modern one. Through a contrast between this liminal character and the depiction of the old Taiga people as resistant to change and adaptation, Hogan speaks against an idealization of traditional ways of life (GREWE-VOLPP, 2016, p. 222). The novel, therefore, does not offer an easy dualistic

²⁶ “Since giving event structure priority over temporal structure seems to be a characteristic of art that is intimately related to an ongoing oral tradition, progress made toward understanding event may be progress toward understanding relationships between oral and written literatures.” (JAHNER, 1979, p. 37)

opposition between “positive” Native and “negative” white, pointing instead to a much more complex framework and the impossibility of clear-cut solutions.

It is possible to affirm that the first crucial event in *Power* is the great storm that happens in chapter two. Omishto is at Ama’s house when she perceives a notable change in the weather conditions. Birds and other animals start behaving in a strange manner, “coming out of the shadow of something mighty” and looking for shelter inside the woman’s dying house. The wind blows with unaccountable strength and a heavy rain pours down, flooding the land. She soon realizes it is a hurricane, and a great destruction begins: “Everything is wet, soaked, this world turning into another one, as if it is only sand turning over in an hourglass, as if someone just now set it on end and it’s starting to fall once again.” (p. 31). The wind is in such fury that it is perceived as a living force with a will of its own, almost an entity: “The wind has pushing hands, it has a body. It screams like a train coming through.” (p. 34). Its aggressiveness is so remarkable that soon deer can be seen flying in the air, as well as uprooted trees and parts of what had been houses. Even Methuselah, a five-hundred-year old tree that had survived several natural disasters up to then, is engulfed by the hurricane and torn away from the land.

Omishto leaves Ama’s house in a desperate move to save her boat, a boat that had belonged to her father, and is caught unprotected in the middle of the storm’s worst moments. At one point, as she tries and fails to stand up and run she compares herself to a crawling baby “inching my way to a birth through air, laboring, moving toward Ama” (p. 34). The metaphor of birth is applied several times by the first-person narrator to account for what is happening both to herself and to her surroundings: “What else can I do when I’m so small and what’s bigger than me now – and everything is – has water running everywhere like something is being born” (p. 35). Likewise, after the storm is finished the girl looks up and sees a woman hanging on a tree, and she soon realizes that it is not a woman, but her own dress. She is naked “as the day I entered this world and breathed my first breath” (p. 41). She looks around and perceives the devastated land and remaining animals as remnants of something bigger that has just died and is walking toward rebirth: a snake covered with mud “moves as if just returned to life, delivered out of death” (p. 39).

Throughout the whole episode, Omishto senses the presence of something bigger. She knows the wind – Oni, as the Taiga people call it – is alive: “Oni is like God, it is everywhere, unseen” (p. 42). Just like Tayo in *Ceremony*, therefore, she knows she is in touch with very fundamental life forces, and she experiences this event as the beginning of

a broader process of renewal and transformation. Omishto recollects an old creation story that Ama had told her and, unlike her mother, she understands how the stories relate to actual circumstances, how they provide people with a pattern for apprehending the right relations of cause and effect, thus making sense of the storm that has just happened through the light of a mythic prototype:

This was how the world was created, Ama told me once, out of wind and lashing rain. “We were blown together by a storm in the first place.” It was all created out of storms. The mud was blown in with the trees and the seeds of growing things already planted in it. [...] I look about me and wonder if it was a storm that carried us Taiga here, lifted us up into its all-seeing, calm eye, and dropped us down in this godforsaken place. Mama used to say I looked like something the wind blew in. (p. 43)

Elaine Jahner asserts that “there is nothing of chance or absurdity in the meaning and experience of event which can only be experienced by one who knows how to recognize its signs” (JAHNER, 1979, p. 39). The experience of event is thus set in a specific time and in a specific place, and the recognition of the right circumstances takes place through the recognition of specific signs. In *Power*, as soon as the storm is over, Omishto remembers it had happened before. She recognizes the flying deer from her dream, suddenly perceiving herself as a participant in a broader and more fundamental pattern, emerging into a new level of experiencing her role in an all-encompassing story:

And I remember now that I did dream, after all. I can see a piece of that dream, and something in my chest moves. I dreamed this storm with the flying deer. That’s how it feels, like I’ve seen this before. I remember it, and the downy fine hair on my back moves with a chill. And I remember that Ama already said, as if years ago, in another time, when she saw the deer with the broken leg. “That’s the one.” As if all this has happened before and could happen again.

Then I get up and go stand next to her and pull the blanket tight as I can and watch the place where the deer has vanished. I say to her as I did in the dream or in another time – and I don’t know why I say it. It’s as if something speaks through me – I say, and I don’t even know what it means, “I know what will happen,” as she moves the door, struggles with it, pulls it over the doorway and tries to close us in. She looks at me with no falseness anywhere on her face, and she says, “So do I.” (p. 44)

The storm and what follows it acquires meaning within a broader perspective of relationship to spiritual energy and myth. Even though she cannot comprehend it yet, Omishto says she knows what is going to happen; she recognizes the signs – the flying deer, the deer with a broken leg –, and she realizes this has happened before, and could

happen again. Such a realization results from her stepping out of chronological time and entering into mythic time: just as in other works by Native novelists such as Leslie Marmon Silko, N. Scott Momaday, and Paula Gunn Allen herself, Linda Hogan structures events in a way that “emphasizes the motion inherent in the interplay of person and event” (ALLEN, 1992, Kindle edition). In *Power*, Omishto “wanders through a series of events that might have happened years before or that might not have happened to [her] personally, but that nevertheless have immediate bearing on the situation and [her] understanding of it” (ALLEN, 1992, Kindle edition).

The storm brings down the older trees – like Methuselah, the tree “we expected to be always there” (p. 49) –, leaving only the younger ones behind. The world as Omishto and the others know it – a violated, desecrated land – is turned upside down. There are no edges anymore, “no borders between the elements”: “Heaven has fallen” (p. 46). As Ama and the girl leave Ama’s house, they walk through ruins and mud, through blown in fences which are now nothing more than little sticks, “rather than the keepers of order they were designed to be” (p. 52). They wander through a chaotic landscape in what the narrator describes as a kind of trance. Omishto follows Ama without knowing why, feeling afraid yet unable to turn back, being moved by a force stronger than her will, while Ama prepares herself, saying “Old Grandmother, I am coming” (p. 49). At first, Omishto understands they are hunting the deer with a broken leg, but she eventually realizes that it is not the deer they are actually after: “I realized for the first time that we are not hunting the deer, that we are hunting, she is hunting, the cat. [...] It has been in her face all along, what will happen, but I have only now seen it clearly” (p. 57).

Throughout the process Omishto describes her experience as a movement within an unordered world, a world in which her old solid references melt down and in which she gradually loses track of chronological time: “I don’t know when it became evening or how long we have been here, but the sun lowers itself in the sky.”; “I cannot tell time or how it passes, but the sun is in pieces on the ground, broken by what must be evening shadows and yellow light.” (p. 56). Time escapes her grasp as both Ama and herself enter a place where “space is full and time is empty” (p. 55). Omishto says she has a feeling about what the whole thing they are doing means but she has no words for it yet, because if she had

they’d feel like history and flowered lands and people with the beautiful ways we Taiga people were said to have before it was all cut apart in history. History is the place where Spaniards cut off the hands of my

ancestors. The Spaniards who laughed at our desperation and dying, and I wish it didn't but that history still terrifies and haunts me [...] (p. 73)

Omishto slowly moves away from what Paula Gunn Allen calls an industrial time sense, an alien and mechanical time sense that causes in the Native person a psychic fragmentation. For Allen, the chronological structuring of Indian tales is connected to the American attempt to fit Indians into the slots they have assigned for them. The imposition of a historical time sense is a traumatic undertaking because, "having perceived us as belonging to history, they are free to emote over us, to re-create us in their history-based understanding, and dismiss our present lives as archaic and irrelevant to the times" (ALLEN, 1992, Kindle edition). For Omishto, history is connected to the poisoning of the land and waters, the devastation of forests, the diminishing of wildlife. While following Ama in their hunting, therefore, she feels like she is stepping into an older time, a time before the existence of radios and houses. "Perhaps it means that in at least one way I am as connected to the past as Ama is." (p. 55). Stepping closer to the heart of creation, the mythic dimension of the world unveils itself before her eyes. She enters the sacred world of ritual magic, as Allen (1992) describes it, engaging in "powers others than those of material existence, or what Carlos Castañeda calls 'ordinary reality'" (ALLEN, 1992, Kindle edition). Arriving at the Taiga Birthplace, the place of second creation, she feels like they "walk toward the feet of that spirit, towards what meet firm and solid with the ground" (p. 54). This is the place where, according to the stories, the Taiga people entered the world. The convergence between myth and life becomes notably explicit in the following paragraph:

Looking up, there is a hole in the sky, the way the old stories say about the hole pecked by a bird, a hole through which our older sister, the panther, Sisa is what we call her in our Taiga language, entered this world. And the anhinga birds with wings draping down have just come down through that hole; I see several of them as they sit in the trees and sun themselves. They don't move when we pass beneath the angle of their wings. We are that determined; we are that in nature. They can read us. [...] It is thirsty land. It is also honest land. It doesn't lie or hide anything. Neither does Ama. Everything she is, everything she is about to do, is clear in her face and in her movement and in her words. The way everything is open to view when sunlight comes down through the hole where all life entered this world. (p. 55)

As Jahner remarks, the conjunction between the right place and the right time is fundamental. Hogan's description of place is very specific: they are at the place of second creation, the place of emergence of the Taiga people into this world, surrounded by

anunga birds, who pecked the hole in the sky so that the panther could enter through it. The description of time is equally precise: it is just after the hurricane that brought the world back to chaos, and it is also at the moment when a hole opens in the sky. At this place and at this time, they find the panther's paw print and Omishto understands that a ritual sacrifice is going to happen. While the girl is capable of participating in their undertaking and still maintain a reflective attitude in relation to it, Ama has been entirely swallowed – mind and body – by the force of mythic proportions that has come to control them. The sacrifice of the panther is her own sacrifice, and she is aware of that from the beginning. She knows what is going to happen, and she knows there is no way around it. As the old story of Panther Woman tells, one day a great storm blew and left a hole in the sky, an opening between the worlds. The woman saw it and followed the panther into that other world, despite her own will – “[no] one enters willingly” (p. 110). She found a world of immense destruction, with rivers on fire and animals dying of sickness. In order to reinstall balance, the panther told her that she had to kill one of them – the one she knows best –, sending the animal to the spiritual world so that it could come back afterwards and “bring life back to this once-beautiful place” (p. 111). In the old story the woman takes the panther's hide to the people of the clan after it is killed, but Ama does not do that. She knows that the panther's deplorable condition would have an enormous impact on them and would drive them to despair. As a woman who lives halfway between the traditional and the modern worlds, she knows that following strictly to the ancient rituals is not enough anymore, even though the concealment of the hide would later result in her banishment and a sentence of four years of aimless wandering.

In relation to Omishto, the storm and the killing of the panther comprise the beginning of a deep transformation. These “events are boundary experiences marking stages of life for the protagonist.” (JAHNER, 1979, p. 38). During the storm and the hunting and even after that, along Ama's trial in an American court, she knows that what they did was right and was wrong. She understands the complexity of the situation and the impossibility of any clear-cut explanation or solution, and at times she feels like she is sinking in an underworld, overwhelmed by shame and guilt. But at the same time, when the “spell” is over and she returns to the world of highways and houses and schools, she realizes she is not the same anymore. She goes back to her mother's house – as she always addresses it – and everything looks different: “it all looks new to me, as if I've never seen it before” (p. 91); “[my] bed is more narrow than I remember, the house more small, as if I've

outgrown it” (p. 94). Walking into the school for the first time after the hunt, she sees that “this once-large world, like my mother’s house, has grown smaller. There is no longer room in it for me.” (p. 105). She sees clearly and with no trace of doubt that she is not one of those people, “not these people who are like vines grown over this land, smothering it” (p. 106), and her perception of her own place in a white-dominated society acquires a new level of accuracy: “I look around me and for the first time, I see things clearly [...], crystal clear, the rich white girls are in one group, the dark, the black, the Indian in others. [...] I see, too, that once my eyes are open, I will never be the same.” (p. 108).

In this emergence phase, Omishto begins to develop a deeper, more complex understanding, realizing that things are not as simple as a dualistic perspective of right and wrong might suggest: “both sides are wrong, but both sides are, also, right” (p. 138); “It’s so easy, what they see, so clear-cut and easy” (p. 144). Inside the court, she faces the impossibility of putting in words, of transmitting through language a truth to which there is no bridge in discourse, of crossing the gap of history and finding a channel through which communication might be accomplished:

There were ashes floating around us, I could say, and it was an unnatural day, but I can’t say that what she did on that one day seemed like a natural thing and I can’t say why. It was like how the world does things in its own. It kills them, I mean. Every last thing. It creates destruction so that it can go on. How can I explain this to them, that night and day were the same thing in that storm, that the very earth had slipped onto its side, and that this is a part of the reason why she did and why I followed her so awkwardly, unable to turn back [...]. How could I say it in any way that might convince them it had been coming a long time, a long, long time, and that it was a part of an old prophecy, an old story. (p. 127)

Once and for all, she abandons the struggle of being a good student, a nice daughter, the role-model other Indian children should look up to and follow. Unlike her mother, she now sees clearly where they stand in history – a realization that develops and solidifies within the cold walls of the court while tearing her apart. In the depiction of Ama’s trial, in the profound violence that pervades her trial, the association between the American legal system, the broader social structure of which it is a part, and the Euro-American clock-based time sense becomes specially evident. In several instances, while Omishto watches Ama’s interrogation in front of a crowd of people who look at her as if she were an exotic animal in a zoo – caged, discredited, diminished –, the young protagonist reflects on the juxtaposition of two entirely distinct worldviews within the

same place, inscribed on the same materiality. When she sees Ama in the courtroom for the first time she describes her clear inadequacy to that place, her detachment from that reality, as if only her body were present but her mind was elsewhere:

At other times she sits, not listening, and looks at the wall, at the darkness as if she doesn't see this room, as if she's forgotten herself, where she is, in this room of law. She folds her arms across her chest, her eyes looking through the walls to the outside. I know she is seeing. She sees the next room to this, where there's another trial, a hearing maybe, a traffic ticket, a case of divorce or child custody. She sees beyond the walls to where the rows of homes are constructed, to where the horses and cattle stand in the fields, heads down, eating, always eating, until they stand at slaughter, are stunned, killed and bled away from life. She sees the cypress trees, the marshes with heat lightning and gases. She sees straight into the wild yellow eyes of the cat that was her relative, and in its eyes – even I remember this – she sees into death and birth and the place where the world is born and it is this, she believes, this light that keeps our people alive. (p. 120)

Ama embodies the wilderness that the English language cannot convey – “[she] is nothing they can imagine. The jury, the judge, the lawyers have never been in the wild places that are the places of Ama” (p. 130). Her truth is a truth unspeakable within the white marble walls of the court, within its orderliness, within its logic. Throughout Omishto's description of the trial, there are clearly two cosmologies at work, two clashing truth regimes that cannot communicate because they cannot see each other “the way you can't see your eyes closed in a mirror. Or how you can't see stars in daylight because there is too much light.” (p. 130). Ama, the elders from Killi Swamp, and Omishto herself stand in the same place and it is a place that the other people in the room cannot discern. In their honest silence and stillness there is openness and an unspoken communication. Especially Ama and the elders inhabit another temporality: in Omishto's perception, Ama is not caught in the sequence of actions that take place around her because right now, right here, she can see through to the bottom of creation, to what lies beyond this circumscribed bubble of reality and cannot be marked by time. Likewise, whenever there is an exchange of glance between two of the Taiga people, a gap opens in time: “[Janie Soto] keeps her eyes down except to look at Ama, for a moment, a moment of broken time.” (p. 142). Omishto is thus at a liminal situation: she participates in both worlds at the same time and she can see where their truths clash. But now, more than ever before she has a clear understanding of where she belongs, or where she does not belong, at least. In the

night that follows that last day of trial, therefore, she raises in bed while everyone else sleeps and realizes that her eyes are open, that she is awake (p. 145).

2.6 The Ceremonial Dimension of *Power*

Demeyer and Moore (2013) explain that Indigenous medicine comes in the form of thought, spiritual transformation, and the inner workings of emotions. The purpose of a ceremony is to reinstall balance through acts of interior consciousness that reintegrate the self within the sacred whole of creation, and it is within this context that the dynamic characteristics of American Indian literature can best be understood, as pointed out by Paula Gunn Allen (1992). Entities other than human participants are present at ceremonial enactments, and

[some] tribes understand that the human participants include members of the tribe who are not physically present and that the community as a community, not simply the separate persons in attendance, enact the ceremony. (ALLEN, 1992, Kindle edition)

In this regard, the author argues that the great body of American Indian literature can best be approached as a psychic journey, or as Louis Owens puts it, a vision quest (1994, p. 25). We have already seen that this is the case of *Solar Storms* and *Power*, and now I would like to explore some crucial points of the ceremonial dimension that underlies the second novel.

The narrative depicts Omishto's journey toward a richer self-recognition as Indian and a reconnection with her people – the Taiga, and more specifically, the Panther Clan. This journey takes place within a ceremonial dimension in the sense that the protagonist engages in a process of transformation that allows her to perceive herself as member of a community at the same time that this community engages in her personal process and enhances it through their participation.

In the first chapter, Omishto is sitting in her boat and she feels the unseen presence of the panther as if space has “eyes and ears, and it watches with all its might” (p. 3). By then, she is afraid of the cat and does not dare to think of it because “they say that to speak an animal's name is to call out the powers inside it” (p. 3). This power is not directly sensed by her and she draws away from it because its mystery and its shadows, the possibility of it

leaping at her or reaching out and taking hold of her, make the hair on her neck rise and she feels deeply frightened. She is a member of the Panther Clan, but she cannot face it yet: she cannot face the animal and what she would see by looking directly into its eyes.

In the beginning of the narrative, even though Omishto recognizes herself as Taiga she still cannot acknowledge the reality of old stories and magic, for her truth is the truth of what is taught at school. She feels safe when curled inside her boat but as soon as she returns to land, she retrieves from what it hides, from what she cannot see but feels to be there. Likewise, when she first sees the four women coming along the road before the storm, she tries to convince herself that it is a mirage, that she is being betrayed by her own eyes because “eyes are like that, [...] always seeing what is not there as real as if it was” (p. 25). Ama had once told her the story of the four women, but she did not believe it then. Her entanglement within foreign ways of knowing – using Silko’s metaphor – hinders her from having a complete event experience and from understanding their visit as clearly as Ama does: “Ama’s voice is strange and beautiful. She says, “There must be good news today. The messengers are coming.’ Says it like she knows them.” (p. 25).

As the narrative advances and the protagonist participates in a series of events, her perception is refined as her views are gradually untangled. The killing of the panther, along with the storm that precedes it, is a turning point in the sense that it leaves her completely naked and open to the world and its insurmountable mystery. She comes to a new level of comprehension by acknowledging the complexity of these events and the impossibility of coming up with a clear-cut, easy explanation. Her ceremonial process is thus enhanced and she begins to see with more clarity the broader web of relations of which she is only one among many participants. She consequently develops, also, a more acute perception of how she is connected to her community – the people from Killi Swamp, their ancestors, Sisa, and their broader spiritual community –, as well as of how these beings have been incessantly participating in her personal process from the beginning, even when she had not been able to see it.

In chapter seven, Omishto is in her boat once again – just like she was in the opening of the novel – while a dense fog surrounds her and obstructs her vision. Here, as in Silko’s *Ceremony*, the fog stands for “a sense of unreality about the world” (CORDOVA, 2007, p. 121); it is a veil that blocks one’s perception and hence equates to the metaphor of entanglement: “Without her bearings this person loses her place in the world. She must sit still, without panic, and wait for a glimpse of something to emerge from the fog.” (p. 177).

Omishto is lost in the fog that surrounds her boat but, unlike the girl from the first chapters, she has developed a solid understanding about the interdependence of all things as well as about how the stories work: how they provide a guide for action and a pattern for apprehending the right boundaries of reality. Hence she begins to recollect an old Taiga story that tells about Oni, which is the word for wind and air. “It is a breathing, ceaseless God, a power known and watched over by the panther people. It passes through us, breathed and spoken and immortal. It is what brings us to life.” (p. 178). This Taiga concept bears resemblance to the Jicarilla Apache term *Usen*. As Cordova explains, this is a “pan-Indian” concept in the sense that it may be widespread throughout Native America, and “it signifies something ‘of a substance, character, nature, essence, quiddity beyond comprehension and therefore beyond explanation” (2007, p. 107). This mysterious force is taken to be “all pervasive, that is, it is everywhere and in all things; perhaps *is* all things” (2007, p. 107).

Lost amidst the fog, Omishto then brings to mind an old story of her people, and through this recollection she sends forth her plea, asking Oni – wind, word, life, God – to guide her out of blindness:

What is spoken travels by air and the old people say even thoughts travel and are carried to it, and this is why, as I find myself in this boat in fog where any direction could be down, I tell the wind I need help and let my plea go out to the four quarters of the world my ancestors spoke of [...]. (HOGAN, 1998, p. 179)

In her search for vision, for clear awareness, she comes to understand that false stories establish false boundaries of experience and prevent one from apprehending the right relations of cause and effect and the right way to act in the world²⁷. She also knows that in order to find her way out of imbalance and tangled views, it is necessary to reconnect to her people and to the greater community that makes up the whole of existence. Since the stories of a people function “as a maker of our identity” (SILKO, 1997, Kindle edition) by showing “who we are,” “where we come from” and by pointing to a shared body of experiences, Omishto summons, through the power of words and storytelling, the participation of all spirits that live in air, of her living relatives and ancestors:

²⁷ Like the first colonists: “they emerged from a dense fog in ships and on horseback like four-legged people with beautiful bodies who believed false stories, that the manatee were mermaids, that they would find riches and eternal youth if they searched far enough and long enough.” (HOGAN, 1998, p.179)

I think of the people who sat in a circle at the ash-colored place, the place that is what remains of a fire, the concealed people in the place where the road thins and vanishes, the people who passed judgment on Ama and maybe on Abraham Swallow. It seems that wind blows their thoughts toward me as I float. As if a small voice is speaking at my ear, one that tells me what it is my people believe. (p. 80)

And as she asks, they come to her. Suspended between sky and water, she is not alone: her people, the Taiga, congregate around her and show her the path, clearing the fog that prevents her from seeing. She acknowledges their spiritual presence and they come one by one, each of them teaching her something. She shares their thoughts and can see through their eyes. Annie Hide is the first: “It comes to me that Annie Hide believes she has felt the power of healing” (p. 181). She comes to teach about the power of wind, breath, thought, and words (see p. 181-2). Janie Soto follows her and teaches Omishto about the interdependence of all things and the right way to act toward all our relations: “our every act, word, and thought is of great significance and there are consequences for each” (see p. 183-4). The next is Joseph Post, Turtle Clan, and he comes to teach her about the power of song in bringing about balance: “Human will and voice, he believes, can work on the forces of nature” (see p. 185-6). Even her mother comes to her and Omishto understands that in chasing her God that lives in Heaven, her mother is still one of them, that “when she prays, it is Oni that passes through her” (see p. 187-8).

The fog begins to lift as she is approached by Ama: “I am dreaming Ama’s dreams and seeing out of her eyes, knowing what she knows.” (p. 188). Through the amber-colored eyes of the woman Omishto experiences the unboundedness of everything: “She says skin was never a boundary to be kept or held to; there are no limits between one thing and another, one time and another. The old stories live in the present.” (p. 188-9). Acknowledging that time is not a straight line and that earth is still growing as it did a million years ago, Omishto can see, like Ama, the ongoing process of creation from its source. She experiences Ama’s liminal role as the one who has been sacrificed to bring the humans and gods together, to bridge this world and the invisible world and make them whole once again.

And, finally, she sees from inside Sisa:

Through the eyes of the panther, it has always been a golden world. In soft evenings light clouds drift and the sky turns yellow. Sisa watches this from the still point of her breath. And what the panther believes and

remembers is that in the wild air and rank water of its existence, in the once-sweet wind, she, the cat, Sisa, is doomed, that humans have broken their covenant with the animals, their original word, their own sacred law. I see it from Sisa's eyes.

This time she is not afraid of the cat. She does not run away, its presence does not bring her fear. She blends with the animal instead, as Ama and Sisa reveal to her, from within, the ancient covenant that used to bind animals and humans together. They bring it back to life inside Omishto and she is able to remember once again the language through which cat and woman communicate. Omishto then becomes the new Panther Woman (GREWE-VOLPP, 2016, p. 222) and in the next chapter she moves to Ama's house, "my house" (p. 195).

The ceremonial dimension of the narrative is gradually unveiled along the novel. As it becomes more apparent, also the direct participation of the Taiga community in Omishto's process grows more and more explicit. They bring her to life again, a rebirth that culminates in chapter eight: "I have just been born, just now risen into the silence of evening" (p. 212). As she summons them, they are summoning her. They summon her back through visions and dreams²⁸, so that in the beginning of chapter nine she dreams

old people are looking in on me, brushing corn on me, and I grow like the roots and stems of plants, as if I am coming up out of the ground to the light after a dark season and growing a new skin like a lizard or snake, shedding an old one.

In this last chapter, therefore, Omishto encounters a panther, "large and with the tawny fur loose and healthy, lean-muscled" (p. 232). They stare at each other for a moment and she speaks to the animal in Taiga: "No shi holo.' I mean no harm, Aunt, Grandmother." (p. 233). She thinks that maybe this is the mate of the one Ama killed. Or perhaps it is the same one returned, as in the story, fully grown and beautiful. It could also be "the one that was born alongside me at my beginning" (p. 233). The next morning, she wakes up and realizes that her back, arms, and legs are scratched all over with clawed, red lines, like they used to do in ceremonies. And at the end of the novel, she leaves Ama's house and goes back home, to the place above Killi, while the four women follow her along the road, singing.

²⁸ "[Dream] connections play an important part in the ritual of life of the Pueblos as of other tribes of the Americas. As the frightening katsina, K'oo'ko, can haunt the dreams of uncleansed warriors and thus endanger everything, the power that moves between the material and non-material worlds often does so in dreams." (ALLEN, 1992, Kindle edition)

3

An Epistemology of Engagement

“I want to suggest that as a nexus of life and growth within a meshwork of relations, *the organism is not limited by the skin*. It, too, leaks.”

Tim Ingold, *Being Alive*

3.1 The Native Ethically-Informed Epistemology

I would like to open this last chapter proposing a question that Lee Hester and Jim Cheney raise and explore in an article entitled “Truth and Native American Epistemology” (2001), which is: How important is truth for knowledge and epistemology? I will go further and suggest still two more questions: Is the attainment of truth an end in itself? Could the search for truth inform us on how to act as beings *in* the world rather than beings *of* the world?

Jim Cheney begins by presenting the concept of *ceremonial worlds*, which he describes as

the worlds (or stories) within which we live, the worlds (myths, if you like) that have the power to orient us in life. They define for us the nature of the sacred (that in which meaning is located, the more-than-human dimensions of our worlds), the natural and the human, and the relationships between them. (p.319)

Ceremonial worlds are built around the notion of responsible truth. They are constructed portraits of the world that ring true for everybody’s well-being. The author recommends, along with Nelson Goodman, that we step beyond the “defeat and confusion”

derived from an understanding of truth as the correspondence between discourse and the readymade world beyond discourse, by shifting our focus from “truth” to “rightness.” Moreover, “ceremonial worlds are built on the basis of an ethical-epistemological orientation of attentiveness (respect).” (HESTER & CHENEY, 2001, p.320). The author argues that in this full sense of the term, ceremonial worlds exist only in indigenous cultures. Very elucidative of what truth represents in this context is the Northern Tutchone term *tli an oh*, which is defined as meaning “correctly true,” “responsibly true” (a “responsible truth”), “true to what you believe in,” “what is good for you and the community,” and “rings true for everybody’s well-being” (p.319).

Native American epistemology is, therefore, ethically-informed. As Deloria points out, more than a liturgical blessing that includes all forms of life in human ceremonial activities, the phrase *all my relations* (or *we are all relatives*) is of great importance “as a practical methodological tool for investigating the natural world and drawing conclusions about it that can serve as guides for understanding nature and living comfortably within it” (DELORIA, 1999, p.34). Burkhart (2004) explains that this term comprises the idea that we must never abandon interconnectedness in search for understanding, but rather find understanding *through* the maintenance of our relations. Furthermore, Norton-Smith argues that the communal experience lies at the heart of Native ways of knowing, inasmuch as in oral traditions knowledge and values are transmitted across the generations in speech acts and other performances – either symbolic acts or other actions with symbols (NORTON-SMITH, 2010, p.12). The communal nature of knowledge is epitomized in the famous vision of Black Elk. As the author explains, Black Elk was assisted by two elders, Bear Sings and Black Road, who helped him perform the horse dance from his vision to the people. Through ceremonial actions with symbols, the vision came to have power and meaning. “But Black Elk could not have performed the vision in isolation, [since his] understanding comes only with the help and wisdom of the elders.” (2010, p.13)²⁹.

Moreover, Deloria points out that the old Indians inhabited a moral universe:

The real interest of the old Indians was not to discover the abstract structure of physical reality but rather to find the proper road along which,

²⁹ As the oral traditions require some members of the community – the elders – to be the repository of tribal knowledge and culture, it is “no wonder [that] the forced removal of American Indians from their tribal lands was such a tragedy, for the harshest rigors of removal fell on the elders [...], many of whom did not survive.” (NORTON-SMITH, 2010, p. 13)

for the duration of a person's life, individuals were supposed to walk. This colorful image of the road suggests that the universe is a moral universe. That is to say, there is a proper way to live in the universe: There is a content to every action, behavior, and belief. The sum total of our life experiences has a reality. There is a direction to the universe, empirically exemplified in the physical growth cycles of childhood, youth, and old age, with the corresponding responsibility of every entity to enjoy life, fulfill itself, and increase in wisdom and the spiritual development of personality. Nothing has incidental meaning and there are no coincidences. (DELORIA, 1999, p.46)

In the journeys of both Angela and Omishto, their increasing understanding of interconnectedness as well as their personal experiences of their role in an all-encompassing story provide them with a deeper knowledge about the world and point out the path of growth towards maturity, which is “the ultimate goal of all human existence” (DELORIA, 1999, p.5). In both novels, the protagonists are presented in the beginning as individuals who bear the wounds of personal and collective traumas and live incoherently amidst “a rubble of distinct and unrelated signifiers” (OWENS, 1994, p.150). They go through a series of experiences that enable them to perceive themselves as participants in a community – the tribes to which they belong as well as the broader community that encompasses the universe as a whole – and throughout this path they are also traveling from information to knowledge to (the prospect of eventually attaining) wisdom³⁰ (DELORIA, 1999, p.14).

In *Solar Storms*, the juxtaposition of both epistemologies pervades the narrative and suggests that they may not be irreconcilable. Western and traditional ways of knowing merge to provide a holistic, more complete framework of reference for making sense of life and the world. The interface between two epistemologies apparently at odds is epitomized in the character of John Husk, a fisherman who lives with Agnes and Dora-Rouge and who collects stacks of magazines and scientific books. In John Husk, the postulates of Einsteinian physics communicate very closely with Native assumptions about the universe, illuminating possible bridges through which to overcome, at least partly, some of the cultural gaps.

Western and traditional ways of knowing do not always walk side by side along the narrative, however. Deloria schematizes the path toward maturity or wisdom as a

³⁰ “When we reach a very old age, or have the capability to reflect and meditate on our experiences, or even more often have the goal revealed to us in visions, we begin to understand how the intensity of experience, particularity of individuality, and rationality of the cycles of nature all relate to each other. This state is maturity and seems to produce wisdom.” (DELORIA, 1999, p.15)

development from information to knowledge to wisdom, arguing, nevertheless, that Western science and traditional knowledge part ways at the middle of this process:

Organisms gather information, and as the cumulative amount begins to achieve a critical mass, patterns of interpretation and explanation begin to appear – even thoughts seem to form themselves into societies at a certain level of complexity. Here it is that Western science prematurely derives its scientific "laws" and assumes that the products of its own mind are inherent in the structure of the universe. But American Indians allow the process to continue, recognizing that premature analysis will produce anomalies and give incomplete understanding. (DELORIA, 1999, p.14)

When Bush starts planning their journey north toward the place where the dams are being built, the land of Dora-Rouge's ancestors (the Fat-Eaters), she spends a great amount of time analyzing a variety of maps. Through them, she investigates water and its paths: "as if she [...] could see in the darkness around us the labyrinth of waterways that went all the way north" (p. 121). To some extent, these maps are helpful in her planning, providing her with a set of references that comes to guide them in specific moments along the trip. Despite all her efforts, however, Angela is well aware that this journey will be an exploration through "strange waters" (p. 121). No matter how accurate these maps – all created by Western cartography – were once believed to have been, their reliability is limited as they fail to capture earth in its constant motion and transformation. As the products of an epistemology regulated by predictability and control, they prove to be insufficient for accounting for a reality that continually escapes their grasp:

What I liked was that land refused to be shaped by the makers of maps. Land had its own will. The cartographers thought if they mapped it, everything would remain the same, but it didn't, and I respected it for that. Change was the one thing not accounted for. (HOGAN, 1995, p. 123)

Another aspect that was not taken into account by the cartographers was the web of relations that make up the landscape, the way animals and other agents interact with the land and transform it. The several maps Bush had been gathering and examining were created at different moments in time: some of them dated back to the seventeenth century, while others were produced more recently in historical terms. However, none of those cartographers had considered the interdependent relations within the ecosystem, the ongoing transformations enhanced by crucial agents at work beneath the more superficial layers of soil:

“Beavers. None of them ever considered how beavers change the land.” She was right. Beavers were the true makers of land. It was through their dams that the geographies had been laid, meadows created, through their creation that young trees grew, that deer came, and moose.” (HOGAN, 1995, p. 123).

Eventually along the journey, therefore, Bush gives up on the maps as they can no longer provide her with a solid orientation. It was a defiant land, Angela says, and regardless of all efforts, its wildness and trickiness would always extrapolate any static portrait. As Dora-Rouge says to her one day, “maps are only masks over the face of God” (p.138). “In its status as official, precise, and stable, cartography cannot account for the organic nature of what it attempts to describe.” (STACKS, 2010, p.167). At this point in the journey, Dora-Rouge comprises their sole source of orientation. As a woman deeply connected to the land and to the old ways of knowing, she represents the Native person in the sense that she inhabits a ceremonial world. She finds meaning and guidance through an unbounded engagement with the landscape. In this way, she gains access into the more-than-human dimensions and is able to apprehend the broader pattern of relations as well as the specific signs that point out the right path to follow: “[she] would tell us what place we would pass on the next day. She’d look at the stars in the shortening night and say: “the Meeting Place,” or “God’s Island.” True to her words, the next day we reached those places.” (p.169).

3.2 Ingold’s *Meshwork* and the Sacred Hoop

Another key difference between western epistemologies and the Native ethically-oriented epistemology is found in their attitudes with respect to anomalies – “data or experiences that do not seem to fit into the patterns that have so far emerged in one’s observations of nature” (HESTER & CHENEY, 2001, p.321). In this regard, Tim Ingold (2011) argues that the scientific inquiry as it stands today is an undertaking that seeks closure, in the sense that it is based upon control and prediction. He continues and affirms that the goal of prediction rests upon the conceit that the world can be held into account. However, the world always goes on its own way, regardless of any attempt to encapsulate it within conceptual parameters defined *a priori*, so that when these predictions prove themselves wrong, scientists are surprised by what they find:

Following the Popperian programme of conjecture and refutation, science has turned surprise into a principle of creative advance, converting its cumulative record of predictive failure into a history of progress. (INGOLD, 2011, p.75)

Surprise is thus the result of a closed attitude towards the world and the attempt to grasp it within a grid of concepts and categories. The author defends that an attitude of openness to the world, on the other hand, produces astonishment – and this has shown to be fundamental to what he calls “the animic way of being”³¹ (p.74). Whereas surprise can only emerge within an epistemological framework governed by predictability and control, those who are truly open to the world and therefore *engage* in its flux, “though perpetually astonished, are never surprised” (p.75). For Ingold, animism and science are not irreconcilable, however. But in order for that to happen, a fundamental change must take place:

[Science] as it stands rests upon an impossible foundation, for in order to turn the world into an *object* of concern, it has to place itself above and beyond the very world it claims to understand. The conditions that enable scientists to *know*, at least according to official protocols, are such as to make it impossible for scientists to *be* in the very world of which they seek knowledge. [...] If science is to be a coherent knowledge practice, it must be rebuilt on the foundation of openness rather than closure, engagement rather than detachment. And this means regaining the sense of astonishment that is so conspicuous by its absence from contemporary scientific work. Knowing must be reconnected with being, epistemology with ontology, thought with life. Thus has our rethinking of indigenous animism led us to propose the reanimation of our own, so-called ‘western’ tradition of thought. (p.75)

Such an attitude of openness and engagement is at the basis of what Cajete calls a Native science, and it informs the Native person about how to act with respect to all kinds of experiences³². From this perspective, no thing is regarded as an anomaly for the simple reason that there is no prior conceptual grid against which data must be evaluated. Moreover, an attitude of openness invites us to step beyond the Cartesian split between the thinking mind and the executive body inasmuch as the line between subjective and objective becomes more fluid and less easily determined.

³¹ Although I prefer not to use the term “animism,” as previously remarked, I am here reproducing the author’s own terminology.

³² “In formulating their understanding of the world, Indians did not discard any experience. Everything had to be included in the spectrum of knowledge and related to what was already known.” (DELORIA, 1999, p.44)

From his very choice of title – *Being Alive* – Tim Ingold is advocating for a new form of scientific practice that acknowledges the inseparability of subject and object as something to be celebrated. The observer and her or his object of inquiry are co-emergent. As the author remarks, “all observation depends on participation – that is, on a close coupling, in perception and action, between the observer and those aspects of the world that are the focus of attention” (2011, p.75). Ingold’s approach is highly informed by what he defines as an “animic” way of being, that is, by the acknowledgement of the all-pervading aliveness of the world that is characteristic of Native cultures. As we have seen in the previous chapters, Native knowledge systems are based upon the assumption that there is a continuum between internal and external worlds – or subjective and objective (to the point that the very use of such terms as internal and external sounds somewhat absurd given their implicit opposition and the suggestion of two separate realms. This is a linguistic limitation, however, that we must try and overcome in language itself).

Tim Ingold thus inaugurates a new form of anthropological practice that celebrates its experimental nature. He argues that through experimentation and an open engagement with the constant flux of the lifeworld, we can begin to heal the gaps that engendered the separation between internal self and external world, or what he calls a *logic of inversion* (which we are going to investigate in more details later on). It seems to me that his approach suggests a conception of truth that steps out of “the defeat and confusion” alluded by Goodman and Cheney in the sense that truth is no longer regarded as the correspondence between discourse and the readymade world beyond discourse. As the boundaries between an entity turned in upon itself and a world ‘out there’ fall apart, the characterization of truth in terms of referential relations between discourse and a static world beyond discourse lose all meaning. In this regard, Ingold remarks that:

Anthropology’s dilemma is that it remains yoked to an academic model of knowledge production, according to which observation is not so much a way of knowing what is going on in the world as a source of raw material for subsequent processing into authoritative accounts that claim to reveal the truth behind the illusion of appearances. This truth, it is claimed, is to be found on the library shelf, groaning under the weight of scholarly books and periodicals, rather than ‘out there’ in the world of lived experience. (2011, p.16)

In the next pages, he suggests three experiments that can help the reader perceive how the currents of thought that we describe as ‘mind’ are only artificially inscribed within

the boundaries of a skull, as well as how the flows of materials comprising corporeal life spill out and extrapolate the limits of the body. At this point, I cannot help but connect Ingold's remarks about the academic model of knowledge production with the fear of not having control, alluded by Hogan, which equates to the fear of wilderness and to the fear of indigenous peoples. Throughout her works, Linda Hogan also advocates for a new model of scientific exploration that takes into account intuitive processes of discovery. In an essay entitled "A Different Yield," she comments on a handful of western researchers who developed a different approach for investigating their objects of inquiry. The biologist Barbara McClintock, who was awarded with a Nobel Prize for her work on gene transposition in corn plants, had an approach to science that was alive, intuitive, and holistic. As Hogan suggests, McClintock came to know her plants in the way a healer would know them, "from inside, from the inner voices of corn and woman" (HOGAN, 2007, p.48). Her method celebrated the experimental dimension of biology inasmuch as it was based on an open and attentive observation that allowed the plants to communicate: "Over and over again, she tells us one must have the time to look, the patience to 'hear what the material has to say to you. One must have a feeling for the organism.'" (KELLER apud HOGAN, 2007, p. 49).

This profound engagement within the flux of the lifeworld, therefore, invites us to question and reformulate deeply-rooted categories such as animate and inanimate, as well as the very definition of life itself. Ingold explains that animism is not a way to believe *about* the world, as it is generally presented by academics. It is not a matter of faith: the idea that it is a system of beliefs that inputs life or spirits to things that are inert is misleading. Animism is rather a condition of being *in* the world: it is "a condition of being alive to the world, characterised by a heightened sensitivity and responsiveness, in perception and action, to an environment that is always in flux, never the same from one moment to the next." (2011, p.68). In the animic ontology, life is continuous birth; it is a generation of being in an incipient world forever on the verge of the actual (p.69). The animic way of being thus acknowledges the relational constitution of being, for nothing exists prior to the relation. All things are co-emergent: "The animacy of the lifeworld, in short, is not the result of a infusion of spirit into substance, or of agency into materiality, but is rather ontologically prior to their differentiation." (2011, p.68).

When discussing about the relational constitution of being, Ingold invites us to reverse the logic of inversion – the logic through which we come to define an organism as

contained within a perimeter boundary, set off against a surrounding world, or an environment. He illustrates this conception of an organism with the drawing below:

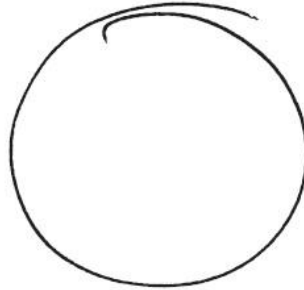


Figure 2: extracted from *Being Alive* (INGOLD, 2011)

In the animic ontology, however, an organism is not so much a bounded entity detached from an external world as it is a trail of movement or growth, every trail disclosing a relation. “[The] trail winds through or amidst like the root of a plant or a stream between its banks. Each such trail is but one strand in a tissue of trails that together comprise the texture of the lifeworld.” (p.69). The author remarks that a line, however, would be a gross oversimplification, since organisms generally extend along multiple trails, issuing from a source. Reversing the logic of inversion, therefore, the author suggests that a more accurate depiction of an organism would be as follows:

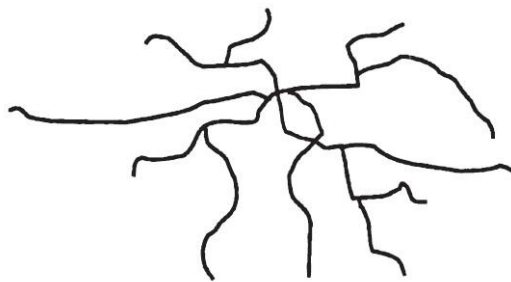


Figure 3: extracted from *Being Alive* (INGOLD, 2011)

In this understanding of the organism as a tangle of multiple trails, there is no distinction between things and their relations: things *are*, precisely, their relations. This is a “field not of interconnected points but of interwoven lines; not a network but a *meshwork*” (INGOLD, 2011, p.70). In the animic ontology, then, instead of occupying the

world, beings *inhabit* it, and while threading their paths through the meshwork, “they contribute to its ever-evolving weave” (p.71).

Ingold’s meshwork of relations resembles, in some aspects, the idea contained in the Plains tribes’ conception of a medicine wheel or sacred hoop. Allen (1992) explains that the sacred hoop comprises the notion of a singular unity that is dynamic and all-encompassing, within which “all movement is related to all other movement – that is, harmonious and balanced or unified” (ALLEN, 1992, Kindle edition). The sacred hoop is all-encompassing in the sense that it contains the whole of existence. The lives of all beings and the entire nature comprising this unity, all of its “components” are equal and interconnected. There is no hierarchy, therefore, among human and nonhuman animals, and all creatures share in the process of ongoing creation. And since all movement is related to all other movement, knowledge equals to the apprehension of the broader pattern of relations, based on which people can guide their actions – always searching for the maintenance or restoration of balance.

The idea of the sacred hoop highlights the constant motion inherent in the world. It can be best understood in terms of an ongoing flux of energy rather than as a structure composed by individual elements in interaction. In this regard, Ingold remarks that the animic world is in perpetual flux, and the beings that participate in it do not exist at locations, but rather occur along paths. The author designates this as *the primacy of movement*.

Finally, I believe it is possible to say that the engagement in a ceremonial time sense – which is inherently qualitative, integrated, and unbounded – engenders distinct forms of perception of one’s surroundings as well as distinct ways of relating to it. The Native time sense is intimately connected to the experience of inhabiting a sacred hoop inasmuch as the psychic integration prompted by the engagement in a ceremonial time sense invites the person to step beyond the anthropocentric framework of linear thought and the primacy of human-to-human relations that it establishes³³. As Donald Fixico points out:

It is a perspective that involves human beings, animals, plants, the natural environment, and the metaphysical world of visions and dreams. This

³³ Such an expansive conception of personhood is reflected in the language of some groups. In Shawnee, for example, it is manifested in the use of “the formative suffix ‘-oa’ when referring to persons – with the ending morpheme ‘-a’ – as in ‘wiyeoa’ (someone), ‘skoteeo’ (fire person), ‘nepioa’ (water person), and ‘weepikwaoa’ (spider person).” (NORTON-SMITH, 2010, p. 7).

broader context of perception involves accountability and responsibility on the part of native people for taking care of and respecting their relationships with all things. (FIXICO, 2009, p. 2)

3.3 An Epistemological Clash in *Solar Storms*

The idea of the sacred hoop is deeply connected to Deloria's description of the cycle of growth from information to knowledge to wisdom in the sense that the attainment of wisdom informs the peoples on how to act within the greater hoop of existence so as to contribute to the maintenance of its balance. At the state of knowledge, patterns of interpretation or explanation begin to appear, but the process must be allowed to continue inasmuch as only in the state of maturity can the person begin to understand "how the intensity of experience, particularity of individuality, and rationality of the cycles of nature all relate to each other" (DELORIA, 1999, p.15-16). This state thus generates the wisdom that will guide the peoples on how to properly act toward all their relations.

In *Solar Storms*, the building of the dams and the consequent spreading of electricity in places that had never had it before serves as a metonymy of the greater disruption produced by the western ideology of progress. In chapter eighteen, Angela, Bush, and Dora-Rouge³⁴ are at the territory of the Fat-Eaters, living temporarily in the house of Tulik, Dora-Rouge's relative. The diversion of water channels had already started and its effects were escalating quickly and reaching far into the land. In the novel, the dams comprise the products of a way of knowing that does not acknowledge the interconnectedness, and thus has not developed from the state of knowledge to that of wisdom. Such knowledge is restricted in the sense that it does not provide a perspective wide enough to encompass the medium and long-term consequences of specific actions in the present. While living at the Fat-Eaters, therefore, Angela experiences the effects of an epistemological clash, of the imposition of an alien epistemology that is not ethically-informed.

While they were at the Fat-Eaters, "the ideas of Thomas Edison reached through narrow wires and voltages and watts and kilowatts into the virgin territory of the north"

³⁴ Agnes died along the journey, in chapter twelve.

(p.128). The arrival of electricity is described in terms of a desecration of the land: land becomes a violated body.

Whereas when traveling with her grandmothers and engaging in a sensual participation with nature Angela experienced a process of opening and letting go of old boundaries, now, inhabiting an angry land invaded by wires and false light, she goes through a reversal process of turning in upon herself – which is essentially what Ingold defines as the logic of inversion. The newly arrived electricity prompts the re-emergence of surfaces such as skin, mirrors, and walls. The narrative of progress to which it is attached, moreover, is approached by Hogan as a story or set of stories that establishes false boundaries of experience and thus brings about imbalance.

With the coming of this light, dark windowless corners inside human dwellings now showed a need for cleaning or paint. Floors fell open to scrutiny. Men and women scrubbed places that had always before been in shadow. Standing before mirrors, people looked at themselves as if for the first time, and were disappointed at the lines of age, the marks and scars they'd never noticed or seen clearly before. I, too, saw myself in the light, my scars speaking again their language of wounds. (p.267)

This “harsh and overly bright” (p.266) light that invades the houses of Holy String Town is paradoxically characterized by what it hides, by the particular kind of darkness that it engenders. Thinking about this artificial light that now intrudes on every corner, Angela reflects on “all the things that glow in the dark and have power” (p.267), and which can no longer be seen. Things lose both their depth and their mystery: the mysterious and powerful dimension of life is overshadowed by the noise of the radio and the agitation of a house that is now always crowded. The profound darkness and silence that Angela had experienced at Fur Island now feel like something of a distant past.

As Angela explains, electricity – and the whole hydroelectric structure necessary to produce it – brought about “a darkness of words and ideas, wants and desires.” Like Coyote in the tale presented by Burkhart (see Chapter One, p.20), those behind the hydroelectric enterprise guided their actions solely upon their wants and desires, hence forgetting about the principle of relatedness. The dams are therefore produced by an epistemology of control and predictability inasmuch as “it was their desire to guide the waters, narrow them down into the thin black electrical wires that traversed the world. They wanted to control water, the rise and fall of it, the direction of its ancient life.” (p.268).

The huge imbalance set about by the building of the dams becomes manifest, among other things, in drastic weather changes that alter the water levels to the point that Ammah's Island eventually disappears. This island is described as a place of hope and beauty where no one was permitted to set foot. It was a place protected by Ammah, who was like a silent god that rarely spoke. From her island and its splendid silence, all things grew, "even my own life" (p.265). This island represented survival and the future, and "no person could trample hope, could violate the future" (p.265). Now, however, it had vanished leaving no trace behind, engulfed by the rumbling machines of the modern world.

Moreover, this light that engendered "a darkness of words and ideas" also spread a feeling of loneliness: "It looks lonely, doesn't it?' Tulik said. I wouldn't have thought those words myself, but he was right. There was a loneliness to it. 'You'd think the opposite would be true,' I said." (p.267). The loneliness now experienced by Angela and others around her speaks for an epistemology that lacks a communal basis. With the old boundaries of skin, mirrors, and walls now re-surfacing, people begin to feel more distant from each other. The "ideas of Thomas Edison" – or the entire structure of electricity produced from hydropower and distributed through systems of wires – are presented as bounded and disruptive, and Angela opposes them to Nikola Tesla's discoveries on wireless electricity production:

In the silence of Tulik's house that night, while I listened to the others breathe, I wished Tesla were alive, the man Husk had told me about as he read through a book of the inventor's patents. I'd seen a photo of Tesla in one of Husk's magazines. The man sat writing in a large room, lightning flying all around him in the background. When Tesla held lightning in his palm, the sound of thunder broke from a false sky. Without wires, Tesla could send power over the world, turn night into day, remove our fears and silences, turn them away with dawn. According to John Husk, Tesla could collapse a building with nothing more than vibration and resonance, could split earth, destroy the Brooklyn Bridge. He knew turbines and force fields and generators. He knew how to do all this at no cost. No one would profit from that kind of power. No one would steal. Tesla had known a force, a cosmic and earthbound power, a stunning light. (p.282)

While Edison's model of energy production is based on water power and hence demands an enormous structure of dams and distribution systems that alter considerably the ecosystems, Tesla had discovered ways to produce electricity without resorting to hydropower and wires. His model of production is less disruptive and the electricity thus generated could be distributed at a lower cost and in a more equal manner, as long as it would not be bounded within wires, but rather available in open space. Instead of

resorting to the manipulation and alteration of natural sources, Tesla had known how to engage with the resources already available in nature to produce an unbounded form of electrical power that, because of its very unboundedness and open availability, would have no cost and, consequently, would generate no profit. The superposition of two distinct ways of knowing becomes explicit in this opposition inasmuch as the products of Thomas Edison's ideas represent an epistemology that is not ethically-oriented and does not have a communal basis. From this perspective, altering water channels and affecting entire ecosystems for the sake of energy production is justified. From a Native viewpoint, on the other hand, this kind of undertaking derives from an incomplete form of knowledge: from a knowledge that is not *tli an oh*, or which is not responsibly true, does not ring true for everybody's well-being.

An Open-Ended Closing

In an oral presentation that later became an essay entitled “Language and Literature from a Pueblo Indian Perspective” (1986), Leslie Marmon Silko explains that the structure of Pueblo expression resembles something like a spider’s web – “with many little threads radiating from a center, criss-crossing each other” (1986, Kindle edition). Whereas we are more used to a linear structure that moves from one point to the next, when it comes to a web, the structure emerges as it is made and one must listen and trust that meaning will be achieved. This structure is also inherent to language and story in the sense that language *is* story, so that each word has a story of its own, that leads to another one, and yet another. Tellers often go into the stories of the words they are using, “so that you get stories within stories, so to speak” (1986, Kindle edition) and one story is only the beginning of many others, that never truly end.

While writing the present thesis, I would find myself compelled to move from one story to the next, from one topic to the next, without being completely certain about where this was going lead into. I was too much attached, at the beginning, to a linear model of writing and the necessity of seeing clearly, right from the start, where I was going to get, so that I could take control of things and create the text out of a previously established plan. Along the writing, however, I was impelled to a process of letting go, one bit at a time, and I finally surrendered to the flux of the stories, allowing them to carry me along and learning to trust that the structure would eventually emerge.

The time I was writing about would incessantly escape my grasp. Like Angela, I found out that by pestering time apart, other things came into manifestation. As Paula Gunn Allen points out, the ceremonial time sense is timelessness. Thus, engaging with our whole being in a process of psychic re-integration, the linearity and the unidirectionality of

a mechanical time sense dissolve, and this dissolution unveils the world in its multidimensionality, with the trails of life radiating to all seven³⁵ directions.

In order to reach the point where I could examine the characters' experience of a Native time sense, therefore, first it was necessary to delineate and explore the protagonists' personal processes of healing the gaps that turned them in upon themselves and hindered them from acknowledging their participation within a sacred hoop – or their process of reversing the *logic of inversion*, in Tim Ingold's words. This journey was also the journey out of a mainstream American way of being towards a rich self recognition as Indians. And since the Native ontology³⁶ is essentially holistic and integrated within all other aspects of Native life, one thing leads to another, and to talk about time one must also talk about space and about the communal basis of the Native way of being. Moreover, I discovered that a Native time sense is inherently connected to a way of being *in* the world, of inhabiting it, as Ingold remarks. And one of the results of being *in* the world is the acknowledgment that all beings and all things participate in its constant and never-ending creation, an understanding that engenders an epistemology that is ethically-oriented. Thus, in the last chapter I explored the possibilities that such an epistemology can offer us for reshaping our conception of what we generally designate as an *environment*, hoping to turn away from a conception of the world as a background against which individual organisms are set, and instead proposing an alternative way of apprehending both world and beings as indivisible and merged together within a meshwork of relations, or a sacred hoop.

In this regard, one cannot help but connect what Eduardo Viveiros de Castro defines as an anti-utopic situation – or a situation in which we have the technical possibilities of creating things that we do not know how to use – to a model of scientific inquiry that lacks an ethical dimension as well as the holistic awareness of interdependence. It seems to me that Deloria's schematization of the cycle of growth towards maturity can provide us with enlightening possibilities to address the issue of knowledge and our current model of scientific investigation from a different perspective. In Deloria's trajectory, the state of knowledge is but one step towards the attainment of wisdom, without which balance is compromised. Moreover, the Native conception of a sacred hoop can help us step beyond an anthropocentric logic that blinds us to the all-encompassing

³⁵ East, North, West, South, Up, Down, and the Center.

³⁶ Even this category seems to be useful only as a temporary analytical tool.

web of relations of which we are incessantly participating, as co-creators. When all the boundaries fall apart, we may realize that we are much closer to each other than we had previously assumed.

Along with Linda Hogan, I state once again that we need to engage in a collective imaginative effort to create new stories, new narratives that envision the possibility of continuation, and that acknowledge our intimate connection to the land and all other beings. As Elaine Jahner explains, false stories provide us with the false boundaries of experience. Under the orientation of narratives that lack wisdom, we may take the manatee to be mermaids, or a whole West continent to be the Eastern land of India.

Finally, I would like to remark that my thesis grew out of a bibliographical research, but not just that. As the nature of Native knowledge is experiential, I owe a great deal to the intuitive processes enhanced by the ceremonial dimension underlying the texts I worked with – and that must be acknowledged. Furthermore, the Buddhist teachings and the practice of meditation also helped me understand with a new level of depth what it means to be *in* the world, inhabiting it as an unbounded participant in its flux.

OM MANI PADME HUM

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Annex 1: Angela Wing's family tree

