

# Narrative as an antidote to a devastating colonial legacy

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## *Abstract*

[Norwegian]

I dette prosjektet bruker jeg ider fra litteraturteoretiker LeAnne Howe i kombinasjon med teorier fra Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart og Lemyra M. DeBruyn, to kliniske psykologer, for å utforske hvordan fortellinger kan fungere som en motkur mot kolonisering, og den destruktive arven fra kolonisering, for urbefolkningen i USA.

Jeg argumenterer for at fortellinger kan være med på å skape og gjenopprette identiteter hos den amerikanske urbefolkningen, identiteter som historisk sett har vært sterkt undertrykte av det dominante samfunnet. Jeg argumenterer videre for at en slik identitetsskaping er en prosess som kan øke velværen blant den Amerikanske urbefolkningen. I tillegg argumenterer jeg for at fortellinger kan bidra til å skape sørgeprosesser som fungerer som medisin mot et fenomen som Brave Heart and DeBruyn kaller «historical unresolved grief», noe som igjen bidrar til å skape velvære (56).

Etttersom både «historical unresolved grief» og undertrykte identiteter er et produkt av den pågående koloniseringen av Amerika anser jeg prosesser som kan bidra til å motvirke disse fenomenene som prosesser av avkolonisering og «re-indigenisation» (Harrison 168). Jeg tar for meg Leslie Marmon Silko sin 1977 bok *Ceremony*, og Linda Hogan sin 1994 bok *Solar Storms*, og utforsker i detalj hvordan disse bøkene skaper velvære gjennom å fasilitere for overnevnte prosesser.

## *Preface*

The “collective identity of people such as the Cherokee, Pequot, Mohawk, Chippewa, and hundreds of other tribes and nations” arose only after an extended period with “European-based conquest, colonization, and settlement in North America” (Bruyneel ix). Concepts represented through words like *Indian*, *American Indian*, *Native American*, *aboriginal*, and *indigenous* are therefore “a product of a co-constitutive relationship with terms such as *colonizers*, *settler*, and *American*” (Bruyneel ix).

Today, this collective identity is known by many designations: Amerindians, Indians, Native Americans, Natives, Indigenous Americans, American Indians, etc. There are several personal and political reasons for adopting given usages, but standardization is elusive (Roemer 9-11). In my project, I primarily use the word *Native American* when I refer to the indigenous people of America. In similar ways, I will use the word ‘Western’ to refer to non-Native people in America.

Other terminological implications arise as well: this paper is written utilizing the colonizers language. It is therefore—as all language is—tightly interwoven with ideologies. Even if Hogan and Silko are participating in a decolonisation process in the textual space, they are also reproducing dominant ideologies by using the English language. Take as example Jerome Bernstein’s argument that one of the fundamental differences between Native American and Western ways of thinking about the world is the notion that humans are distinct and separate from animals: he writes that “all...American Indian languages hav[e] no word for ‘animal’” (134). His point is that Westerners tend to perceive themselves as distinct from and higher up on the hierarchical ladder than animals, whereas Native Americans tend to view themselves as “being a member of the animal realm, connected and communicating in a direct way with nature, not separate from, or superior to, other living beings” (134). As such, when Hogan and Silko use the English language to write about how humans and animals are relatives of ‘equal worth’, they also reproduce the dominant ideology simply by engaging

with and in a language that implicitly reproduces the ideology that humans are higher up on the hierarchical ladder and superior to animals. This example shows how the use of English offers a different ideological stance on the human place in the world.

In this project I am dealing with Native American books that are the product of and produce very different epistemologies from the ones I am used to. What is really at the core of Native American epistemologies? And is there a unifying factor? And is this important for a consideration of how the books participate in a decolonisation process? In dealing with these books, I have come to realise that Paula Gunn Allen's influential 1986 book *The Sacred Hoop* is frequently cited when one wants to understand Native American epistemologies. As there are hundreds of nations across the geographical territory that is known as the United States, does Allen speak on behalf of all of them, of some, or none at all? All I know is that Allen, along with several others, such as LeAnne Howe, Linda Hogan, and Catherine Rainwater, find some characteristics of Native American epistemologies that tend to be different from Western ways of perceiving the world. I have chosen to use those features, characteristics, or ways of being as identified by these authors when I argue that something represents a Native American way of being in, perceiving, or understanding the world.

Furthermore, what is a Western way of perceiving the world? I am not trying to produce a harmful dichotomy, but instead think about what constitutes a decolonisation when there are two different ways of perceiving the world at play, especially in a colonial framework in which difference is often asymmetrical.

Atalay warns us that a “binary and unidimensional... [representation] of colonization...[is] vastly oversimplified” and falls in danger of removing “the agency of the actors involved, particularly for those portrayed as colonized ‘victims’” (Atalay 601). A

complexity of interaction was certainly the case in the colonisation of North America.

Native people were not simply passive receivers of colonial actions; they actively

resisted repeated attempts of cultural, spiritual, and physical genocide and simultaneously had profound influence up on colonial settler population and governments. (Atalay 601)

Like Atalay, LeAnne Howe asserts that the many tribes in America profoundly influenced, shaped, and formed the settler population. She suggests that “a Native creation story was one of America's authors” (Howe, “Tribalography” 33).

Elizabeth Horan and Seonghoon Kim warn us that a “historically monolithic, reductive, and collective” image of Native Americans perpetuates the sense that Native Americans are something of the past, instead of an active voice to be reckoned with in the contemporary society. This serves the interests of the settler-state, in part by denying recognition of the contemporary struggles facing Native Americans (43).

When I suggest *Solar Storms* and *Ceremony* offer alternative Native ways of thinking and being, my intention is not to perpetuate a “monolithic, reductive” and “vastly oversimplified” image of colonisation. Instead, I want to explore how the novels themselves offer the idea that there are fundamental differences at play between Native American and Western ways of thinking about the world.

## *Introduction*

### Conquest, genocide, and trauma

It is well known that the Native American population has been a victim of a genocide committed by European settlers and later the U.S. government—based on the definition of the United Nations General Assembly’s Convention of Genocide from 1948 (Brave Heart and DeBruyn 57, Legters 768-775, O’Brien 1-12, Poupart 86-98). Even today, the process of colonisation and its accompanying oppression is ongoing in the Federal jurisdiction over Indian Country. As Suzanne O’Brien contends, “indeed, Native Americans are still being colonized on a daily basis – there is nothing ‘post’ about it” (7).

Among the consequences of past and ongoing colonization is that “American Indian and Alaska Native people have long experienced lower health status when compared with other Americans” (“Disparities”). The mortality and suicide rates are much higher in many American Indian nations when compared to the rest of the population in North America. Alcoholism and other forms of drug abuse are also prevalent (“Disparities”)<sup>i</sup>. Both researchers and professionals have consistently associated this distress with indigenous historical experiences of European colonization (Gone, “A Community-Based treatment” 2). Before European contact, most Native Americans did not traditionally utilise mood-or mind-altering substances (Brave Heart and DeBruyn 65-66).

Parallel to the United States governments’ attempt to assimilate the American Indian population into dominant U.S. culture, there were and are efforts by Native American authors, clinical psychologists, and others, to increase the life-quality of Native Americans. Maria Yellow-Horse Brave Heart is a clinical psychologist who has been working with residents of the Lakota nation. During the 1990s, she introduced, with Eduardo and Bonnie Duran, the concept of historical trauma (Kirmayer et al 300). While there is no agreed upon definition of historical trauma (Gone, “A Community-Based treatment” 8), Brave Heart explains it as the

“cumulative emotional and psychological wounding over the lifespan and across generations, emanating from massive group trauma experiences” (Brave Heart, “The historical trauma response” 7).

The historical trauma response is the constellation of features in reaction to this kind of trauma. It includes depression, self-destructive behaviour, suicidal thoughts and gestures, anxiety, low self-esteem, anger, and difficulty recognizing and expressing emotions. It may also include substance abuse, often an attempt to avoid painful feelings through self-medication.

Historical unresolved grief is a component of historical trauma, and healing such grief is an important part of remedying historical trauma and restoring well-being among Native Americans today. Brave Heart explains it through what she calls disenfranchised grief: “Disenfranchised grief is grief that persons experience when a loss cannot be openly acknowledged or publicly mourned” (Brave Heart and DeBruyn 62-63). She argues that American Indians have not been allowed to grieve the losses of relatives in the past, citing several reasons for this: in the dominant United States culture, American Indians have historically been considered stoic and savage. This led to that belief that American Indians were “incapable of grief,” and as such there was “little recognition in their sense of loss, need to mourn, or ability to do so” (Brave Heart and DeBruyn 63).

Another factor that contributed to the disenfranchisement of grief was the collective understanding of relationships: “In the dominant United States culture, grief is considered legitimate only when the relationship to the deceased is an immediate kinship tie” (Brave Heart and DeBruyn 62). As such, grief was not considered legitimate for the American Indians’ loss of land, plants, and animals; and “for American Indians, land, plants, and animals are considered sacred relatives, far beyond a concept of property. Their loss became a source of grief” (Brave Heart and DeBruyn 58). Moreover, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, traditional American Indian ceremonial grieving practices were banned in an



attempt to assimilate the American Indian population into the dominant United State culture (Brave Heart and DeBruyn 58-63). Brave Heart presents an example from the Lakota nation of how the prohibition of ceremonial practices contributed to disenfranchised grief:

Bereaved close relatives would cut their hair and sometimes their bodies as external manifestations of their grief. Some Lakota traditionally would 'keep the spirit' of the deceased for one year before releasing the spirit, thereby permitting time to adjust to the loss. At the end of an appropriate mourning time, traditional grief resolution included 'wiping of the tears' ceremony. ("The historical trauma response" 8)

With this evidence Brave Heart and DeBruyn argue that Native Americans experienced disenfranchised grief, and that the accumulation of unresolved grief across generations leads to the development of historical unresolved grief. It is akin to a "prolonged or complicated grief, but includes the generational collective experience of unresolved grief" (Brave Heart and DeBruyn 178).

That Native Americans were and are denied the right to grieve has several implications. Disenfranchised grief can result in an "intensification of normative emotional reactions such as anger, guilt, sadness, and helplessness. The rituals and funeral rites in the aftermath of a death help the bereaved "adjust to the death, publicly display emotion with social support, and permit the community to reaffirm social values" (Brave Heart and DeBruyn 63). Guilt, something that often accompanies a death, is relieved through rituals and the mourning period is limited by the societies' practices and expectations.

However, the absence of grieving rituals and other processes can limit the resolution of grief, and

the lack of understood social expectations and rituals for mourning foster pathological reactions to bereavement...when a society disenfranchises the legitimacy of grief among any group, the resulting intrapsychic function that inhibits the experience and expression of the grief affects, that is, sadness and anger, is shame. Subsequently, there can be a lack of recognition of grief and inhibition of the mourning process. Grief covered by shame negatively impacts relationships with self and others and one's realization of the sacredness within oneself and one's community. Associated feelings are helplessness, powerlessness, feelings of inferiority, and disorders in the identification of the self. (Brave Heart and DeBruyn 63)

Brave Heart and DeBruyn argue that the compounding effects of unresolved grief have been passed from generation to generation: "Like children of Jewish Holocaust survivors, subsequent generations of American Indians also have a pervasive sense of pain from what happened to their ancestors" and "incomplete mourning of those losses" (Brave Heart and DeBruyn 64). From a clinical perspective, Brave Heart contends that many of the problems facing American Indians today are a combination of a "high degree of trauma exposure" and "the impairment of traditional grief resolution practices" ("The historical trauma response" 10).

"Survivor guilt" it is a product of historical unresolved grief as well. It is "an ensuing fixation to trauma, reparatory fantasies, and attempts to undo the tragedy of the past"—a fixation in turn leading to feelings of inferiority and helplessness (Brave Heart, Wakiksuyapi, 247).

Present generations of American Indians face repeated traumatic losses of relatives and community members through alcohol-related accidents, homicide, and suicide. Brave Heart and DeBruyn argue that the layer of present losses in addition to the major traumas of

the past and the accompanying unresolved grief “fuel the anguish, numbing, and destructive coping mechanisms related to disenfranchised grief and historical trauma” (65).

Internalised aggression and oppression can be understood in part as a product of historical unresolved grief (Brave Heart and DeBruyn 57-60). Internalised aggression and oppression are harmful to communities as a whole: “the root of anger is at the oppressor, but any attempts at catharting anger to its root result in swift retaliation by the oppressor... [it is] safer to cathart anger on a family member” (Poupart 90). To Lisa Poupart, the harshness of the aggressor is internalized and projected onto members of family and society, often even more marginalized than oneself. A Native woman is necessarily more marginalized as she is both woman and Native. Native women in turn tend to act out their aggression on their children (Poupart). Poupart sees violence within Native American communities as an “expression of internalized oppression and as an extension of Euro-American violence against American Indian nations” (86). The consequences of such behaviours are severe, and include alcohol abuse, high rates of suicide, homicide, domestic violence, and child abuse.

These kinds of arguments are well supported by assimilation policies adopted by the U.S. Federal Government. The boarding school era in particular led to the belief among many Native Americans that they were not capable of raising their own children and that Native Americans were culturally and racially inferior (Brave Heart and DeBruyn 59). These children were raised without cultural role models, which left them bereft of cultural behaviours that lead to a positive self-esteem, a sense of belonging, and a solid American Indian identity, making them ill prepared for raising their own children in a traditional American Indian context (Brave Heart and DeBruyn 59-60). Children in boarding-schools experienced “abusive behaviors – physical, sexual, emotional ,” and Brave Heart and DeBruyn assert that “boarding schools have had devastating consequences for American Indian families and communities” (59).

This kind of clinical psychological understanding of Native American life has influenced my reading of Native American literature, and my project overall aims to join literary and decolonial approaches with the insights gained by the work of Brave Heart and DeBruyn. In particular, LeAnne Howe, Brave Heart, and DeBruyn have all argued that storytelling is a powerful antidote to the colonial legacy of broken identities and disenfranchised grief: Brave Heart and DeBruyn argue that if we want to facilitate the healing of historical unresolved grief we need a model that integrates “both clinical psychology and traditional American Indian interventions” (Brave Heart and DeBruyn 66). They argue that such a model is a “catalyst for stimulating the process of grieving historical trauma” (Brave Heart and DeBruyn 66). Traditional practices, such as the teaching of storytelling skills and tribal history to youth, can be used to facilitate grieving processes as storytelling can heighten the awareness of historical trauma and simultaneously stimulate the experience of associated grief, encouraging the emotional expression of pain and stimulating a cathartic experience (Brave Heart and DeBruyn 67). In the process, powerful feelings can be expressed without negative stigma, and the symptoms of unresolved grief and historical trauma can be confronted and challenged in a way that “anxiety and other features...[can be] identified and normalized,” something which in turn permits more open expression of affect (Brave Heart and DeBruyn 68).

In addition to facilitating grieving, storytelling can also serve as a device for individual and collective relief from trauma by supporting “identity formation, a sense of belonging, recognition of a shared history, and survival of the group” (Brave Heart and DeBruyn 66). A positive self-esteem, a sense of identity and belonging can help the individual embrace “the range of one’s feelings – grief, shame, and pain to joy, pride, and resolve to maintain balance – in order to regain personal wellness and the power of community self-determination” (Brave Heart and DeBruyn 70).

Remedying historical unresolved grief is an important step towards restoring well-being among Native Americans, and since historical unresolved grief is perhaps best

understood as a product of the colonial legacy, remedying it ought to be considered part of a decolonisation process. Moreover, weak or poor Native identities are also a product of the colonial legacy, and as such, creating strong Native identities—as Brave Heart and DeBruyn argue is necessary—can also be seen as a part of the decolonisation process.

Linda Hogan defines decolonisation as a process where one takes out the “Western mindset that is so all-pervasive” (Harrison 168) and re-indigenise[s]... returning to traditional ways of thinking and being (Harrison 168). Based on her understanding of decolonisation and re-indigenization, this paper suggests that decolonisation and re-indigenisation are two parallel processes occurring simultaneously as people replace a colonial—Western—way of thinking with an indigenous way of thinking and being.

Choctaw narrative theorist LeAnne Howe supports Brave Heart and DeBruyn’s ideas about the power of narratives. She writes that “Native stories are power. They create people. They author tribes...creation stories, as numerous as Indian tribes, gave birth to our people” (“Tribalography” 118). She argues that stories create reciprocal relations between performers and audience—leading to processes creating “attitude and culture, the very glue which binds societies together” (“Tribalography” 121). Identities will be created and expanded in this process.

Howe’s theories of storytelling can be seen as an important part of longer-term strategies for Native American survivance, as they reminds us of the power that stories have to create and influence the world. Survivance can be understood as a form for decolonisation, but it also differs from it in several ways. Gerald Vizenor introduced this term to the context of Native American studies when he published his influential book *Fugitive Poses: Native American Indian Scenes of Absence and Presence* in 1998. Survivance is a term that refers to the resistance, endurance, and survival of indigenous people in the face of oppression, tragedy and genocide: "survivance means more than mere survival, more than endurance; the stories of survivance are an active presence...an active repudiation of dominance, tragedy, and

victimry" (*Fugitive Poses* 15). Many scholars have come to adopt the term, and today "Native American scholars and activists use the word 'survivance' to express continuity with the past coupled with an insistence that the Native American presence is a vital part of contemporary America, not a romanticised relic from how the West was won" (Onciul 3). Like Howe does, Vizenor suggests that "the practices of survivance...are obvious and unmistakable in Native stories" as they create a "narrative resistance to absence, literary tragedy, nihilism, and victimry" (*Native Liberty* 1).

Closely linked with the notion of survivance and decolonisation is the notion of tribal sovereignty. Kevin Bruyelle contends that "sovereignty is a social construct meant to convey certainty regarding the inevitably contingent relationship between the...variables of people, power, and space over time" (24). This means that "the social construction of sovereignty is always in process" (24). In the 1960s, "indigenous political actors faced the tension of having to construct and express their politics betwixt and between a civil rights framework predominant in the United States and the nationalist decolonization framework common to many post-World War II third world struggles" (123). An "unique path [was][then] taken by indigenous [people] (123). This path is one where "indigenous political actors work across American spatial and temporal boundaries, demanding rights and resources from the liberal democratic settler-state while also challenging the imposition of colonial rule on their lives" (xvii). This resistance engenders what Bruyelle "call[s] a 'third space of sovereignty' that resides neither simply inside nor outside the American political system but rather exists on these very boundaries, exposing both the practices and the contingencies of American colonial rule" (xvii). We can understand storytelling as having an important part in the goal to achieve an active sense of presence and political sovereignty understood through the eyes of Native American political actors—both of which are processes of decolonisation and re-indigenization.

Even as I have chosen to use the words “decolonisation” and “re-indigenization”, Vizenor and Bruyneel merits mention here as they represent important voices in the interdisciplinary field of Native American studies.

Brave Heart, DeBruyn, and Howe offer the belief that storytelling has the power to create and heal—in part by creating and shaping identities through influencing the way people think of themselves and others, but also through its power to facilitate the grieving processes necessary to remedying historical unresolved grief.

This paper argues overall that Leslie Marmon Silko’s 1977 novel *Ceremony*, and Linda Hogan’s 1994 novel *Solar Storms*, facilitate these processes, and by doing so these novels become works of art with the power to heal and restore well-being in Native American communities. I use the word re-indigenisation as a way to chart the processes of identity creation, grieving, and healing offered by the these novels.

Each novel performs these processes primarily by taking us on a journey of reconnection. This journey is facilitated by a symbiosis between form and content, and also by the way each novel creates cultural role models that help readers and protagonists alike form a strong, positive Native American identity. At the end of both novels, the main-characters have developed strong Native identities themselves and turned into cultural role models that exemplify the process of re-indigenisation and healing.

An important part of the work these cultural role models do is reconfiguring our understanding of masculinity: Paula Gunn Allen writes that “in many tribes, the nurturing male constitutes the ideal adult model” (2). She argues that tenderness and nurturing qualities among men have been considered weak or emasculating in the Western culture, whereas it traditionally has been the opposite in Native American cultures (1-9, 31-41, 194-208).

Channette Romero contends that there has been an attempt by the dominant society to “emasculate Native men”, including policies that have “lowered the image of Indian men in

the eyes of some Indian women...[making other] men seem more desirable” (18). Silko and Hogan use their novels to create strong, masculine role models that are tender and compassionate. The promotion of a Native understanding of masculinity, and the subsequent rejection of a Western idea of masculinity, is itself an act that can contribute to the process of mental decolonisation and help in the creation of a strong, positive Native identity.

Additionally, the novels facilitate the remembering and grieving that Brave Heart and DeBruyn argue is necessary to counteract the colonial legacy. They do so by invoking and remembering atrocities from the past and present, thus facilitating the cathartic experience Brave Heart and DeBruyn argue is necessary. Even the characters in the novels grieve, as if the novel and reader together collectively grieve and remember. Importantly, the characters in each novel grieve for the losses of close as well as more extended family: land, water, animals, plants, and other beings.

Identity formation and grieving are closely linked with the processes of recognising and rejecting colonial oppression. An important function of Silko’s and Hogan’s work of art is to recognise and reject many kinds of colonial oppression—and in this process, they open up space for both identity creation and grieving by influencing ways of thinking and being.

With these arguments in mind, my project focuses closely on two novels, Silko’s *Ceremony* and Hogan’s *Solar Storms*. They are similar yet very different, written in different generations about different Native communities. I have therefore opted to treat each novel in a separate chapter, but my overall aim is to show how each accomplishes a similar result of healing and decolonisation.



## *Literature review*

### *Ceremony*

Leslie Marmon Silko's 1977 novel *Ceremony* is perhaps the most read and discussed Native American novel. Several scholars argue that Silko's novel creates what we can view as a ceremonial—in addition to a rhetorical—space. Allen Chavkin, for example, suggests that Silko, by adding three opening myths as a “framing poem” (Owen 94), thought

that her story of the troubled World War II veteran Tayo could be a new kind of ceremony. As a result, she revised the novel to account for her new concept and added the first pages with mythic poems. Later she would end the novel in similar fashion. By beginning and ending the novel with mythic poems, Silko underscores her assumption that traditional tribal solutions are relevant to the problems of Tayo and the other despairing veterans. (7)

In other words, Chavkin argues that Silko deliberately links myths to contemporary issues, and this in combination with a circular structure makes her novel a new kind of healing ceremony (8).

Catherine Rainwater takes a similar approach, writing that the novel reveals how reality is the direct result of the world we construct. Her work puts the novel in terms of a Native epistemology of ceremonial connectedness:

a reader of Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* must recognize two concepts that are fundamental to Native American epistemology as Silko (and various other contemporary American Indian writers) represent it. First, what we call 'reality' is partly a product of semiosis, for many aspects of 'reality' yield to human thought and

imagination expressed through art and language...According to Silko's narrator, thought becomes story and story, in turn 'tak[es] form in bone and muscle.' For Silko, material reality originates, to some extent, in the imaginal realm of consciousness. (226)

In this way, Rainwater argues that reality is a product of semiosis, and Silko's novel rebuilds links between bodies, minds, and land—literary making the 'bone and muscle' of material reality (119). Thus, she argues, we participate in the world building of *Ceremony* when we as readers engage in the "'ceremony' of reclamation" (Rainwater 119). By recognizing, transforming, and changing our semiotic relationship with the world, we can change and transform the world we live in. Paula Gunn Allen echoes and elaborates on Rainwater's notion of the power of stories and language:

the tribes seek— through song, ceremony, legend, sacred stories (myths), and tales — to embody, articulate, and share reality... through the sacred power of utterance they seek to shape and mold, to direct and determine, the forces that surround and govern human life and the related lives of all things. (Allen, *Sacred*, 55-56)

Paula Gunn Allen also offers an influential ecofeminist reading. She argues that we need to understand *Ceremony* in terms of a Laguna Pueblo epistemology that underscores the importance of women and the female as a nurturing force. She argues that Ts'eh, grandmother, Night Swan, Josiah, and others represent those who are in connection with their feminine aspects, whereas Emo, Rocky, and Auntie represent those who have lost this connection. Allen argues that the feminine as a creative and nurturing force is an inherent and essential part of Native American epistemology, and those who have lost this connection have also lost an essential part of themselves.

Edith Swan takes a similar epistemological-feminist approach towards *Ceremony*, understanding Tayo's story as a journey through a landscape where different cardinal points inhere "a repertoire of qualities indicative of varying male and female personae" (313). Thus, as Tayo journeys in different geographical directions, he also journeys to different gendered spaces in the spiritual realm. They "tutor Tayo in the ceremonial nature of gender" (313). The spirits teach Tayo his feminine and masculine aspects. Swan in many ways shares Allen's notion that Tayo needs to identify with his feminine aspect in order to heal, and that this identification "gives Tayo his social identity by reuniting him with the land, the ultimate artefact of Spider Woman's stream of thought" (313). The reunification with the land and the creation of a social identity become the means by which Tayo is healed.

Delilah Orr's approach towards *Ceremony* highlights the importance both of female/women in Laguna Pueblo epistemology and of animals. Her approach is also deeply indebted to Native American mythology. She argues that Tayo's recovery is "primarily through the agency of a holy female figure and her animal allies" (2). "By revisioning these provocatively rich traditional figures and adapting them to a new narrative form, Silko reinforces her theme of dynamic culture" (10). Orr concludes within the realm of Laguna Pueblo epistemology and says that "as mediators of spiritual well-being, bear, mountain lion, Yellow Woman, and deer insure continuance and proper response to new experiences and changing circumstances in tribal life" (10). She argues overall that Silko adapts and changes Laguna lore to thematise "the dynamics of cultural change" (2).

Whereas these authors primarily link the characters in *Ceremony* with Laguna epistemology, I will explore how we can understand 'feminism' and 'masculinity' in *Ceremony* as a form of decolonisation.

Jude Todd also sees *Ceremony* as a work that needs to be understood in epistemological terms. She argues that "Silko begins the book with the meta-story, or myth, that encompasses all the stories within the book – even all the stories outside the book,

because this condensed version of the Laguna Pueblo creation story accounts for creation in present time as well” (156). Whereas Louis Owens calls the initial poems “framing poems” (94), and Todd calls them “meta-story”, they both share the notion that *Ceremony* is part of something larger, and that the first few and final pages are important in order to understand the book as a whole. Todd argues that the second page of the book, a framing poem called ceremony, is key to understanding Tayo's sickness: just as Spider-Woman/Thought-Woman keeps her stories in her belly, so do humans “keep their stories in their bellies, ready to spin out the right story at the right time to keep the world in balance” (157). In Tayo's case, his pent up experiences make him sick. This explains why “Tayo must vomit: He must purge and purify his stomach from the lies fed to him since childhood” (157). Todd argues that “only when Tayo has vomited out the lies, the tangled stories of grief, blame, loss and despair, can he make room inside himself for the healing stories” (160). Thus, she argues, “at the core of *Ceremony* is the battle between the bellies of these two men: Emo, a killer who serves the witchery, spins out stories of evil, destruction and the lies that pit one person against another; Tayo, a healer who serves the Earth, does his best to tell stories that unravel Emo's lies” (161). She argues that if we attempt to answer the questions of Tayo's sickness, we are led “on a trail deep into the heart not only of *Ceremony* but also of Pueblo Indian mythology and metaphysics”. Tayo's sickness, she argues, is in his belly, and the “parallel between state of mind and state of belly becomes more intelligible when we consider the importance and the source of stories for Pueblo people” (156). I have drawn inspiration from her ideas of how Tayo must rid himself of the lies he has been told. But I have also chosen a very different framework—seeing *Ceremony* through the lenses of decolonisation and re-indigenization.

The readings of *Ceremony* presented above are by no means the only worth mentioning. However, they represent a wide selection of authors who approach *Ceremony* as something more than simply a book. Despite variety among their readings, they each

approach *Ceremony* as if it were a form of healing ceremony—a way to heal bodies as much as minds, human connections, and the world itself.

I view these approaches to *Ceremony* and understandings of storytelling as fundamentally different from my own sense of the limits of language and literature. In one way, they are similar: they both share the notion of the power of storytelling. However, whereas I argue that the power of storytelling comes primarily from a psychological or ideological effect through the creation of a rhetorical space, these authors argue that storytelling has, in addition to an ideological effect, a more than ordinary power to “shape and mold, to direct and determine, the forces that surround and govern human life”, to produce reality (Allen 55-56).

John Prudy does not rely on epistemology in the same way. Instead, he argues that we should view *Ceremony* as a rewriting and transformation of traditional Laguna stories, especially that of the Sun Man's battle with the Kaup'a'ta. Silko parallels this myth to the story of Tayo, and as the protagonist of the novel becomes increasingly aware of how his personal experiences relate to those that are told in the mythic stories of Laguna, so is he able to turn into a powerful representative of his people and defeat his nemesis Emo and the witchery. Prudy places Silko in the long-standing tradition of Laguna storytellers who explain how their world has changed and who dramatize how one can modify old ways to accommodate the new situation in which individuals find themselves. As such, his reading informs my analysis of how *Ceremony* helps create a strong Native identity. Yet, what I do extends beyond Prudy's work and includes new and additional ways of seeing how *Ceremony* creates cultural role models in the textual space.

Scholars such as Peter G. Beidler and Rachel Stein also offer readings that position themselves outside of Laguna epistemology. In their approach towards *Ceremony*, the primary focus is on the importance of nature. The former argues that it is important to

understand the symbolic role of animals in the novel if we are to fully understand the meaning of the work. If we understand Silko's use of animals, he argues, then we are able to understand the process of Tayo's growth. A destructive attitude towards nature is juxtaposed against a more symbiotic Native American attitude. He argues that Tayo is initially under the influence of white culture, and because of this "grow[s] away from the plants and the animals" (18). When he loses his reverence for animal life, he also loses his self-respect and views himself as "useless and inanimate" (19). According to Beidler, the best measure of Tayo's recovery is the change in his attitude toward animal life. We can understand this approach to be similar to mine as a decolonised mindset embodies reverence for animal life.

Similarly ecocritical in her approach, Rachel Stein examines how Silko employs the storytelling and spiritual heritage of the Laguna Pueblo to reframe the history of the European conquest of America as an opposition predicated on "irreconcilable notions of land use and land tenure" and as "a struggle between different cultural orientations toward the natural world" rather than as irresolvable racial hostility (193). In Silko's novel, she argues, the Laguna's nonexploitative, reciprocal relationship with nature is confronted by the white's domination of the natural world. Thus, in *Ceremony*, nature becomes the contested ground between these two opposing cultures. In order to redress this conflict, Silko's mixed-blood protagonist re-creates traditional Laguna stories and ceremonies that counter the destructive ideology of the whites. Both authors argue that nature is the contested field, and that the primary difference between Native Americans and whites lies in their attitude towards the nature. Both authors use epistemologies to explain these differences, and to some extent they both argue that a change of attitude towards the environment is necessary for the greater good.

Elizabeth N. Evasdaughter argues that Silko uses *Ceremony* to change people's perceptions of the world. Her essay's title "Healing Ethnic Hatred by Mixed-Breed Laughter" explains in many ways what she does. According to her, "Silko...crosses racial styles of humor in order

to cure the foolish delusions readers may have, if we think we are superior to Indians or inferior to whites, or perhaps superior to whites and inferior to Indians" (83). She says that Silko uses many of the features inherent to the biting humour "so prominent in the 20th-century white culture" (83). She argues that the strategy employed in this novel "has the end-result of opening our eyes to our general foolishness, and also to the possibility of combing the merits of all races" (83).

Many of the above scholars take a cultural approach to *Ceremony*, seeing in it an epistemology different from that found in the broader Euro-American world. Orr, Allen, Todd, Swan, and Rainwater all do this, focusing variously on gender roles, spirits, and the environment to highlight the differences between Laguna Pueblo and Western perspectives. Others, like Stein and Beidler, focus on how reconciliation is possible through a change in attitude towards the environment.

A unique voice in *Ceremony* scholarship is represented by David Treuer, who argues provocatively that there is no such thing as Native American literature, and that we should focus on "echo, not origin" (5). Thus, he argues, we should focus on the book and not the context of the book, such as the origin and identity of the author. He compares *Ceremony* to *Star Wars*, and says that during the 1960s-1970s there was a spur in popularity for stories about orphans in search for themselves, and sees *Ceremony* as a product of its era. The myths present, he argues, some of which are made up by Silko he argues, are present as a juxtaposition between the struggle in the prose and the state of nirvana in the text, thus serve a literary function and nothing else. According to him, there is no struggle or emotions in the myths, as opposed to in the prose. While Treuer's voice merits mention here, my project will contextualize Native American novels.

My approach towards *Ceremony* will not focus on ecocriticism, feminism, or mythology, but rather on how we can understand the novel as participating in a decolonisation and re-

indigenisation process with the power to heal. My thinking here builds on Gloria Bird's decolonial reading of *Ceremony* as a novel that challenges "existing hegemonic discourse" and "alters the terms of inclusion" (3). My approach will also utilize clinical psychology and narrative theory, expanding Bird's work to focus on how the novel facilitates grieving, creates a strong Native identity, and in other ways recognises and rejects colonial oppression. As such, although we both have projects related to the idea of decolonisation, my project overlaps only minimally with hers, contributing to a broader, interdisciplinary conversation that explores decolonisation in *Ceremony* or other Native American novels.



## Solar Storms

Many scholars offer eco-feminist readings of Linda Hogan's 1994 novel *Solar Storms*. Silvia Schultermandl and Wajiha Rizvi are two such scholars. They tie the abuse of women inextricably to the exploitation of nature. Schultermandl argues that the novel shows how "racism, sexism, and ecological domination are products of the same hierarchical structures within society" (70). As Angel grows an indigenous understanding of the world so is she able "reintegrate into her matrilineal Native American heritage" and break with this hierarchical thinking (81). By doing so, Angel "restore[s] the peace within herself, within her family, and within the biosphere" (68). Schultermandl suggests that the "peaceful resolution of the mother-daughter conflict opposes the domination of Euro-American patriarchy" (81). And with Angel's "triumph over the patriarchal laws of the dominant empire", the novel positions itself as "literary resistance against a culture/country/government/philosophy that draws its strength from the unscrupulous exploitation of the seemingly powerless" (81).

Rizvi makes similar connections between attitudes towards the environment and the oppression of indigenous people, women in particular. Her eco-feminist reading suggests that the "subordination of women...ought to be read in conjunction with the brutal and merciless environmental degradation" (65). Her essay seems to be inspired by Schultermandl work, and she makes further inquiries into how hierarchical structures create the attitudes that allow for exploitation of the "subordinated".

Summer Harrison has made a recent reading of the novel in which he suggests that *Solar Storms* shows how "cultural and political narratives" enable colonial imposition towards people and land that in turn "perpetuate trauma" (1). These colonial narratives "justify violence against Indigenous peoples and lands based on ethnic and speciesist hierarchies" (1). He claims that Hogan's work "employs formal strategies to...[uncover] links between trauma to situated (racialized/gendered) bodies and the environment", and that the novel offers healing by "proffering 'new stories' that recognize the living agency of the more-

than-human world” (1). His reading seems to be inspired by the works of Schultermundl and Rizvi. We can understand these approaches to be similar to mine as a decolonised mindset embodies reverence for the natural world.

In her influential reading “Mapping the Toxic Trail of Windigo Capital in Linda Hogan’s *Solar Storms*”, Desiree Hellegers uses Native stories to contextualise and understand *Solar Storms* in a new way. She charts how Hogan’s novel uses “Algonquin Windigo stories about cannibalistic ice monsters as an indigenous framework” to show how the “intergenerational trauma suffered by Native communities is inextricably linked...to the intergenerational life of capital rooted in colonial violence and exploitation” (2). By doing so, Hogan shows how corporations, just like the ice monsters, grow more powerful when they consume land and people (2). She also argues that Hogan’s novel explores the “immediate impact and the ‘slow violence’ of longer-term environmental disaster” (2). By connecting environmental attitudes and the well-being of the Wing women, Hellegers also positions her work as a form of eco-feminism. Her work informs my project, but I place these Inuit stories in a decolonisation framework.

Irene Vernon explores how *Solar Storms* is a story with the power to “to tell and retell the story of the traumatic experience, to make it ‘real’ both to the victim and to the community” (34). The “story of the Wing family—Loretta Wing, Hannah Wing, and Angel Jensen” gives Native people “an explanation and understanding of their lives” by letting them know that they “are not alone, that others have suffered the same experiences[,]. . .and that others have survived” (34). By taking us on a journey with the protagonist, *Solar Storms* becomes a “a vehicle for other trauma survivors to validate and hopefully rise above as they witness Angel finding a language, a story, to shape herself” (47). She argues that Hogan’s novel becomes an unfolding act of “resistance” to colonial violence and imposition because “Angel builds a Native identity based on Native customs, ideologies, beliefs, and an

understanding of the responsibilities we have toward each other” (47). Although we both have projects that focus on the novel’s ability to counter trauma, my project overlaps only minimally with hers, contributing to a broader conversation that explores how Native American novels can be used as a way of countering a harmful colonial legacy, in part by facilitating cathartic experiences.

Another scholar who explores how the novel challenges and reconfigures narratives is Christine Jespersen. Her essay, "Unmapping Adventure: Sewing Resistance in Linda Hogan's *Solar Storms*", sees Hogan’s novel through the lenses of the adventure story genre. She argues that *Solar Storms* is a “reclamation and recasting of the American adventure story as one belonging to indigenous peoples” (274). Arguing that Hogan “reweaves adventure as a mode of activism based upon Algonquin beliefs about gender, ecology, and resistance”, she suggests that Hogan engages in a process of reconfiguring “Euroamerican narratives that sponsor cultural and ecological conquest as a means of forming individual and national identity” by articulating “adventure stories [that initiate] sustainable resistance to cultural and environmental devastation” (274). By doing so, Hogan “intervene[s] in ecological narratives that separate humans from nature” and suggests alternative Native narratives where “identity [is] interlaced with diverse human communities and the environment” (274). As such, we both have projects that explore how the novel attempts to expand and reconfigure understandings of identity, but I position my analysis in a decolonisation framework.

Theresa Smith and Jill Fiore offer a unique voice in scholarship. Their focus is on the novel’s representation of religions. They argue that Hogan’s novel delivers “ways in which the reader may learn to navigate a world that is both familiar and strange to the Euroamerican consciousness” (58). They argue that such unfamiliarity exists because of the way in which Native American religions tend to differ from Christianity:

[Christianity] is largely a commemorative religion while Native American traditions are revelatory. This means that Christianity...marks past events by construction of churches and doctrines while Native people continually receive direct, unmediated revelation from a sacred landscape and the genii loci that populate that landscape (59).

The readings of *Ceremony* presented above are by no means the only worth mentioning. Yet, they represent a variety of voices. Some of them draw strong connections between the suffering of the environment and the suffering of the people. Schiltermandl, Rizvi, and Harrison explore how hierarchical structures lead to violence and trauma to land and people. Hellegers draws on an Inuit framework of ice-monsters to explore the connections between nature, people, trauma, and capitalism. Vernon explores how the novel becomes exemplary for the kind of actions that other trauma victims can take. Jespersen focuses on Hogan's reconfiguration of the adventure story. While these scholars are but a few of a great number who have explored Hogan's novel, I have tried to show how my work contributes with new ideas to a broader conversation that explores decolonisation and healing in *Solar Storms* or other Native American novels.

## *Ceremony*

Leslie Marmon Silko's 1977 novel *Ceremony* is set in the Laguna Pueblo nation of North America. The novel aims to heal the harmful legacy of colonialism, in Laguna Pueblo specifically, but also amongst its broader Native American audience. It does so by taking us on a 'journey of reconnection' that aims to replace harmful colonial ways of thinking and being in the world with healthful indigenous ones—a re-indigenization—so that stories are what heals reader and protagonist alike.

Tayo, the main character of the novel, is traumatised and sick. A survivor of the Bataan Death March, his trauma can be immediately traced to World War II. But the novel shows that his trauma can also be understood in Brave Heart and DeBruyn's terms, as a historical trauma created by Westernised ideas being integrated into Native identities. The novel offers another explanation as well, one of a cosmological order. These last two explanations are inclusive of one another. I will show how the novel offers these explanations, and how both add to the re-indigenisation work the novel does.

The novel works through both form and content to re-indigenise. Structurally, the novel consists of a non-chronological main-story set as prose, the one about Tayo. This story is in turn intertwined with other minor stories that do not overtly relate to the main story, but can be read as doing so. The stories set as prose are in turn broken up and intertwined with myth-poems. There is one major myth-poem, and several other minor myth-poems that do not overtly relate to the major myth-poem. The myth-poems are traditional Laguna Pueblo myths injected into the novel, inserted into the middle of the pages to look like poems. This poetry fronts the stories of the main character Tayo and provides a link between them. This prosimetric form emphasizes the kind of interconnection and integration that the narrative itself works toward in the character of Tayo.

To understand and argue the re-indigenisation potential of such a structure I will draw on Paula Gunn Allen's idea of 'tribal consciousness'. The novel's embodiment of a tribal consciousness is in part facilitated by its non-chronological stories, stories that are in turn broken up and intertwined with other non-chronological stories—some set as prose, and some set as myth-poems.

As a part of the journey of reconnection that the novel takes us on it creates powerful cultural role models that exemplify the kind of actions that can be taken in order to overcome the trauma caused by history and war. Some of the role models are happy and vigorous, yet tender and compassionate men. Through them the novel aims to decolonise our understanding of masculinity. The novel also makes use of traditional Laguna myths to re-indigenise our understanding of masculinity and the relationship between men and women.

Additionally, the novel is a space for remembering and grieving past atrocities, to land and people. Such remembering and grieving can help facilitate the kind of processes that Brave Heart and DeBruyn argue is necessary to counter the forces of historical trauma.

With these arguments in mind I will explore how and why Silko's novel is a powerful tool of decolonisation and re-indigenization.

Silko's structural choices are powerful re-indigenisation tools: the novel's move between different stories, some of which are set as myth-poems, as well as between the past and present within the same story, are features that directly break with 'Western' narrative conventions: building on Western traditions and understandings of narrative, Andrew Bennet and Nicholas Royle define the narrative as "a series of events in a specific order—with a beginning, a middle, and an end" (55). Even as many scholars, among them David Treuer, have argued that such a definition is non-conclusive, there seems to be a strong connection between chronology and narrative in 'Western' narrative conventions (Treuer 29-68).

Conversely, in tribal oral literature, narrative structure has historically been non-chronological:

In...the oral tradition...the time line is achronological; that is, the ritual nature of time is the measure used, so action sequences include memories, legends, histories, dreams, and visions, the combination of which suggests the integrative nature of ritual consciousness. (Allen 94)

Paula Gunn Allen explains that stories embodying “memories, legend, histories, dreams and visions” lead to narratives that tend to “weave in and out of past, present, and future...as the story moves toward its inevitable conclusion” (94). She argues that

the difference between mundane [chronological] timekeeping and [non-chronological] ritual time is so crucial...that the sense of time used in tribal novels *determines* what kind of *consciousness* is reflected in the novel—Western, industrial, secular, or tribal, wilderness, ritual consciousness (94, my italics).

With her argument, that a novel’s consciousness—its embodied epistemology—is inextricably bound up with the structure of the novel, we can understand epistemology as manifesting and reproducing in both content *and* form. And *Ceremony* is a novel precisely in this vein: it “weaves in and out of past, present, and future, blending dream and vision into the action as the story moves toward its conclusion,” and in the process it produces a Laguna Pueblo epistemology (94). And by doing so, *Ceremony*’s structure helps the novel function as a cultural artefact with the power to decolonise and re-indigenise the reader’s mind.

The novel's decolonisation power manifests in form and structure, and in the symbiosis between these—but it is perhaps its content that is the major drive behind its journey of reconnection and its re-indigenisation processes. *Ceremony* opens with four myth-poems that draw us into a Laguna Pueblo epistemology, the epistemology that the novel wants to re-indigenise us into. In this epistemology, the universe is understood as a “Scared Hoop of Being”, consisting of “a fabric of interconnection” (Allen 11). Each being, from the smallest subatomic particle, to the largest star, is considered interconnected through physical and metaphysical connections (Allen 11-29). Spider-Woman, also known as Thought-Woman, is the one who “weaves us in a fabric of interconnection”, and by doing so she is the essence and creatrix of all life (Allen 11).

The novel's opening myth-poems reflect such a Laguna Pueblo understanding of the universe by emphasising the power of Thought-Woman to create: “Thought-Woman is sitting in her room and whatever she thinks about appears” and ends with: “She is sitting in her room thinking of a story now / I'm telling you the story she is thinking” (1).<sup>1</sup> With this myth-poem on the initial page, Silko suggests that Thought-Woman *produces* the world of the novel and the novel as a cultural artefact<sup>2</sup>. In fact, she reminds the reader that *all* stories—including stories in the form of lived experience both inside and outside *Ceremony*—are created by Thought-Woman.

On the second page of the novel there is a myth-poem that unfolds the beginning of the story that Spider-Woman is thinking about. It begins with a story about a man performing a story about the power of stories: “[stories] are all we have to fight off illness and death. You don't have anything if you don't have the stories” (2). It ends with the words “and in the belly

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<sup>1</sup> All references in this chapter, unless specified otherwise, are to Silko's novel *Ceremony*.

<sup>2</sup> The novel opens with a Keresan word, and doing so it reminds that *Ceremony* is set up like a translation of an original, instead of the text being originally English supplemented by a Keresan language.



of this story the rituals and the ceremony are still growing” (2). The novel seems to suggest that there is a story within the larger story that is the novel *Ceremony*—a story which in turn has a ceremony in its “belly” (2). That a story has within itself a story and a ceremony echoes the image of a spider who spins a web out of its body, as if Spider-Woman is spinning out the stories in the novel.

Silko then moves her focus from the power of stories to the power of ceremonies, as if to emphasise the power of *Ceremony* to heal: “the only good cure I know is a good ceremony, that’s what she said” (3). Drawing this introductory section to a close, Silko writes only “Sunrise” (4), and she ends her novel with the words “Sunrise, accept this offering, Sunrise” as if the novel as a whole is one large ceremonial prayer (244). In this way, with these words on the fourth and final pages, Silko spends the first three pages of her novel setting up and contextualising the power of thought, stories, and ceremonies—her own novel—and on page four she begins the prayer, ceremony, and story that *Ceremony* is. These opening pages draw the reader into a Laguna Pueblo epistemology, beginning the slowly unfolding journey of reconnection that the novel offers as a whole.

These opening pages set up the epistemology that allows us to understand Silko’s use of imageries. She associates intricate patterns, designs, and circles with people who are contributing to, and creating life like Spider-Woman is. Intricate patterns and circles represent the fabric of interconnectedness, the Sacred Hoop of Be-ing. People who suffer from a sickness, and those who work towards destroying Spider-Woman’s fabric of interconnection, are associated with entanglements and knots—the very opposite of Spider-Woman’s intricate webs and patterns.

The prose that begins just after the opening poems of the novel makes use of this kind of Laguna symbolism to set up Tayo’s sickness. He is sick because he can’t keep anything together in his head: everything is fragmented, broken, and knotted:

He could get no rest as long as the memories were tangled with the present, tangled up like colored threads from old Grandma's wicker sewing basket when he was a child...He could feel it inside his skull—the tension of little threads being pulled and how it was with tangled things, things tied together, and as he tried to pull them apart and rewind them into their places, they snagged and tangled even more. So Tayo had to sweat through those nights when thoughts became entangled; he had to sweat to think of something that wasn't unraveled or tied in knots to the past—something that existed by itself. (6)

The imagery of entanglement and knots permeates the opening pages to symbolise Tayo's remove from Spider-Woman's life giving fabric of interconnection. As becomes evident through the novel's journey of reconnection, his remove from Spider-Woman—his sickness—is created by his exposure to and influence by the Western world. In this section of the novel, the Western world's grip on Tayo is especially strong: Tayo has been heavily influenced by people with Western ways of being, in school and war.

*Ceremony* then draws us from post-war Laguna into Tayo's hallucinatory recollections of the Bataan Death March (6). Stylistically, *Ceremony* does not indicate this movement into Tayo's hallucination by marking it off in any way, and this exemplifies how the novel embodies a "tribal consciousness": it is a vision woven into the larger story about Tayo, one that shifts the actions of the story from the present to the past.

Additionally, this move from the present to the past makes the narrative progression entangled and confusing, making entanglement manifest in both content and form—a stylistic choice that serves to emphasise Tayo sickness.

In the first hallucinatory recollection, Tayo is sitting around a campfire, and "he realise[s] that the [white] man's skin i[s] not much different from his own" (6). He thinks of

“the skin of the corpses...in ditches on either side of the long muddy road,” and he realises that “even white men were darker after death” (6-7). The novel then takes us into another hallucination, to a day Tayo is ordered to execute some Japanese prisoners:

when the sergeant told them to kill all the Japanese soldiers lined up in front of the cave with their hands on their heads, Tayo could not pull the trigger...[because] in that instant he saw [uncle] Josiah standing there...Tayo stood there, stiff with nausea, while they fired at the soldiers, and he watched his uncle fall, and he *knew* it was Josiah; and even after Rocky started shaking him by the shoulders and telling him to stop crying, it was *still* Josiah lying there. They forced medicine into Tayo’s mouth, and Rocky pushed him toward the corpses and told him to look...and said, ‘Tayo, this is a *Jap!* This is a *Jap* uniform!’ And then he rolled the body over with his boot and said, ‘Look, Tayo, look at the face,’ and that was when Tayo started screaming because it wasn’t a Jap, it was Josiah (6).

Just as the novel drew us into the first hallucination without warning, so does it shift from one hallucination to another without indication. This is a stylistic choice that jolts the reader, and we come to experience a form of interconnection between the way Tayo sees similarities between him and a white man, and the way he sees Uncle Josiah instead of a Japanese soldier.

*Ceremony* does not reveal the importance of Tayo’s vision of Uncle Josiah until halfway into the novel; here on these opening pages,<sup>3</sup> the novel ‘tricks’ us into believing that

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<sup>3</sup> I refer to pages five to eighteen respectively, as the ‘opening pages’ of the prose portion of the novel. Even as there are no chapters in the novel, or other means of breaking up the novel, these pages are distinct from the rest of the prose because of the way an imagery of entanglement and hallucinations permeate them: even as this imagery permeates the novel as a whole, it is especially dominant on these opening pages.

Tayo's vision is a symptom of sickness. Tayo himself suffers from such an understanding: the prose returns to post-war Laguna and Tayo thinks of how the Western doctors had diagnosed his hallucination as "battle fatigue," just as they explained that "hallucinations are common with malarial fever" (7).

But the novel quickly rejects such a Western understanding and treatment of Tayo's sickness. When the novel leaves Tayo's visions and returns to post-war Laguna, Tayo thinks back to his time in the Los Angeles veteran's hospital:

For a long time he had been white smoke. He did not realise that until he left the hospital, because white smoke had no consciousness of itself. It faded into the white world of their bed sheets and walls; it was sucked away by the words of doctors who tried to talk to the invisible scattered smoke. He had seen outlines of gray steel tables, outlines of the food they pushed into his mouth, which was only an outline too, like all the outlines he saw. They saw his outline but they did not realise it was hollow inside...He waited to die the way smoke dies, drifting away in currents of air, twisting in thin swirls, fading until it exists no more (13, 15).

"White smoke" is a powerful imagery to describe the impact the white (Western) world and medicine have had on Tayo (13). Like white smoke fades into walls and sheets, so is Tayo absorbed by the Western world when he is in the hospital, making him even more at remove from Spider-Woman's life-giving ways of being. And like smoke is without heavy substance, sucked away and pushed through the air by people speaking, so is Tayo almost dissipated by the diagnoses of the doctors. Just as smoke is lifeless, so does Tayo feel dead inside, waiting only to die the way smoke dies: having no agency upon itself.

But to counteract the overwhelming futility on these opening pages, *Ceremony* ends its opening section by providing a hope. The novel subtly suggests that Tayo is in the process of awakening:

he cried at how the world had come undone, how thousands of miles, high ocean waves and green jungles could not hold people in their place. Years and months had become weak, and people could push against them and wander back and forth in time. *Maybe it had always been this way and he was only seeing it for the first time.*

He had believed [when he was young] that touching the sky had to do with where you were standing and how the clouds were that day...distances and days existed in themselves then; they all had a story. They were not barriers. If a person wanted to get to the moon, there was a way; it all depended on whether you knew the directions—exactly which way to go and what to do to get there; it all depended on whether you knew the story of how others before you had gone. *He had believed in the stories for a long time, until the teachers at Indian school taught him not to believe in that kind of ‘nonsense.’ But they had been wrong.* Josiah had been there, in the jungle; he had come. Tayo had watched him die, and he had done nothing to save him. (17, my italics)

We can understand this form of ‘awakening’ as echoing the notion of re-indigenization. If he is to get well, Tayo must come to believe again in Laguna Pueblo wisdom, and change his way of thinking and being accordingly.

*Ceremony* introduces two other war-veterans, Harley and Emo, in order to explore how Westernised ideas can be understood as a source of sickness and ill-being among Native Americans generally—and Tayo specifically.

Harley is at remove from traditional life-giving ways, and in order to assert this the novel associates knots and entanglement with his character. Harley encounters Tayo early in the first half of the novel, just after the opening section, and he seats himself next to Tayo in the sand. He tries to “draw[] an intricate pattern in the dirt,” but he “keep[s] wiping away the outlines he draw[s] in the dirt...angry that he can’t[] draw them the way he want[s] them” (21). Harley’s inability to create intricate patterns suggests a lack of vision, an inability to see how things fit together.

Harley also embodies internalized self-contempt, a contempt he has been taught by Western people in school and war—just like Tayo. This contempt has had a devastating impact on Harley, in part by making him addicted to alcohol. Harley suffers greatly from his addiction because he turns violent when he drinks. But he has also lost all kinds of introspection: even if he has “done a lot of drinking and raising hell with Emo and some of the other veterans,” he believes that “it isn’t a damn thing wrong with...[him]” (20).

The contempt Harley has manifests in his way of being and the stories he tells: he wants Tayo to come with him to the bars all the way on the other side on the reservation. At first, Tayo is hesitant. But the novel then exemplifies the ideological power of stories: Harley tells Tayo that—by riding the long distance to the bars—they can achieve the “longest donkey ride ever made for a cold beer” and set “an Indian world’s record” (22). Harley’s story makes Tayo forget about “things that had happened, the dead sheep, the bar fight, even jail”; and Tayo goes to the bar, only to harm himself and end up in trouble as he always does when he goes to the bars (22).

This encounter between Harley and Tayo has several implications: the way Harley emphasises that the record would be an *Indian* record exemplifies the extent to which he has

internalised the dominant society's perception of Native Americans: he sees himself and the other Indians as drunks.<sup>4</sup> But the way Tayo forgets about all the fighting and raising hell Harley has done when Harley tells his story, one that suggests that Indians are drunks, exemplifies how easy it is to believe these kinds of colonial stories. Tayo forgets about the drinking and fighting Harley has done because Harley's story, like many other colonial stories, teaches Tayo that drinking and fighting are typical things Indians do.

In the novel as a whole, *Ceremony* uses the character of Harley to remind readers of the harmful influences of the Western world—how Westernised ideas, echoed in the contempt Harley feels towards Indians, are harmful to Harley and other Indians alike<sup>5</sup>.

More strongly possessed by Westernised ideas is the character of Emo: he is obsessed with the Western world, including Western people's fascination for war and destructive weapons. The stories he tells echo his obsession: they fetishise malevolence against other beings, and in this way they reflect many Westerner's enthusiasm for guns and destructive weapons. Emo's stories are harmful because they embody and reproduce the most violent of Westernised ideas. The novel shows us precisely how by taking us back to an earlier post-war day when Emo and Tayo are in a bar. This movement back in time not indicated in any way, exemplifying the frequent, unmarked temporal moves the novel makes.

Emo is bragging about his war-crimes to Tayo and some other war-veterans at a bar on the Laguna reservation: "we were the best. U.S. Army. We butchered every Jap we found. No Jap bastard was fit to take prisoner. We had all kinds of ways to get information out of

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<sup>4</sup> The dominant U.S. society has painted Native Americans as "worthless, alcoholic, and lazy" (Allen 5). In part as an attempt to justify to the boarding school era, but also other genocidal actions against Native Americans (Poupart 86-98).

<sup>5</sup> Each time Tayo encounters Harley he changes his way of being for the worse. These encounters are also like 'tests' for Tayo—tests that Tayo fails until he has healed enough, 're-indigenised' enough, to succeed.

them before they died. Cut off this, cut off these” (56). Tayo gets provoked by these stories because Emo brags about his malevolence against other beings. Listening to his stories, Tayo sees Emo as a man who grows “from each killing...feed[ing] off each man he kill[s]” (56). Tayo yells “Killer!” to Emo, but Emo is set on provoking Tayo further, and he yells back to Tayo that he “drink[s] like an Indian” and that he is “crazy like one too—but you aren’t shit, white trash” (58). In response, Tayo grabs a bottle and stabs Emo with it: as he is stabbing Emo, he feels that “he get[s] stronger with every jerk Emo make[s], and that he wil[l] get well if he kill[s] him” (58). By trying to counter Emo’s violence with additional violence, by trying to get well by imposing his strength onto Emo, Tayo himself becomes like the people in Emo’s stories—the ones who believe that power comes from exhorting power onto others; a very colonial way of thinking.

In addition to stories fetishizing violence, Emo tells stories about how “the Indians’ mother earth...[is an] old dried-up thing”, stories “cursing the barren dry land that the white man had left them”, and stories about how “Indians deserve something better than this goddam dried-up country around here...blowing away, every day” (23, 56, 50). These stories create contempt and neglect for Laguna land and Laguna beliefs—such as the sacredness of and interconnectedness with Mother earth. Instead, his stories reflect and create a desire for what Western people have, like his story about his desire for “San Diego and the cities where the white women...[are] still waiting for them to come back and give them another taste of what white women never got enough of” (56).

We can understand Harley and Emo as Native characters who are the victims of colonial aggression through the way they have been influenced by Western ideas—something that has created a contempt and anger in them. Through the suffering of these characters, and through the way Tayo changes his way of being under the influence of these characters—a change in being that is always harmful—the novel attempts to teach us how and why Westernised ideas are harmful to Native Americans.



It is not before the end of the novel that we as readers, and Tayo, fully understand how and why people with Harley and Emo's way of being are harmful. But, throughout the novel, *Ceremony* invokes the imagery of knots and entanglement to guide us towards such an understanding, like the day Tayo and Emo are in the bar: when Tayo hears Emo's stories, he feels that "the knot in his belly get[s] tighter"—and this suggests Emo's stories and way of being are harmful because they contribute to Tayo's sickness (56).

More harmful to Tayo is the contempt he has felt at the hands of his own aunt, Thelma, who has raised him since he was four years old, when his mother, Laura, left him. She has been contemptuous towards Tayo because he is of mixed-blood: "since he could remember, he had known Auntie's shame for what his mother had done, and Auntie's shame for him" (53). The legacies of Tayo's aunt and mother allow us to position Tayo's trauma as a form of colonial and historical trauma: Laura and Thelma are the victims of the Western society through school and church. The abuse these women have suffered is passed onto Tayo.

Through the third-person subjective narrator with Tayo's perspective—the one who is the narrator of the majority of the novel—we learn about Thelma's psychological terror against Tayo as he grows up. Thelma has always isolated Tayo from Rocky and herself, but kept "him close enough to feel excluded, to be aware of the distance between them" (62). Thelma never excludes Tayo when other people who care about Tayo are around, such as Uncle Josiah or Grandma, and Tayo believes that he cannot tell them about Thelma's painful words and actions towards him because "it would hurt them so much" (64). Because Thelma is not cruel towards Tayo when these people are around, she is so that no one can tell Tayo otherwise.

An example of Thelma's cruelty is when she permanently takes from him his only photograph of his mother. Tayo begins to cry, and Uncle Josiah asks Tayo why he is crying. But Tayo does not tell Uncle Josiah anything, because he believes that his wish for having a

picture of his mother back is so shameful that he will hurt Uncle Josiah by telling him, and he does not want to hurt Uncle Josiah because “he love[s] him too much” (65). Tayo’s refusal to tell Josiah about the picture exemplifies how he has internalised much of what Thelma has told him, like how Tayo and Laura are the cause of much of the “shame and disgrace...[in] the family” because of their connection with white men (64).

A few pages into the narration of Tayo’s childhood, the narrative perspective shifts from the third-person subjective narrator that presents Tayo’s view, to a third-person omniscient narrator that unfolds and contextualises Tayo’s upbringing. We learn that both Laura and Thelma are persons who, on the one hand, have a strong bond with their own people, so strong that they can “feel what others were feeling” (63). This ability is something that has “descended” in these women, passed down to them through “thousands of years from the oldest of times, when people...shared the same consciousness” (62).

But we also learn how they have been influenced by the dominant Western society. Thelma and Laura are both products of boarding-school, where they were taught “about the deplorable ways of the Indian people” from “holy missionary white people who wanted only good for the Indians,...who dedicated their lives to helping the Indians” (63). Their teachers “urged...[them] to break away from...[their] home” (63).

That Laura has internalised the self-contempt she has been taught in school is exemplified by the very way she feels an excitement from seeing “that despite the fact that she was an Indian, white people smiled at her from their cars” (63). Because she has been told one set of stories by her Native community, and another set of stories by the Western teachers at her school, Laura is torn between the two: she “hate[s] the people at home when white people talk about their peculiarities; but she always hate[s] herself more because she still...think[s] about them, because she know[s] their pain at what she...i[s] doing with her life” (63). The shame Laura feels towards “her own people and at the white people,...grow[s] inside her, side by side like monstrous twins” (63).

Not only did Thelma attend a boarding school like Laura, but another source of her self-contempt and anger is her devotion to Christianity, a religion that “separate[s] people from themselves...[,] [that] trie[s] to crush the single clan name, encouraging each person to stand alone, because Jesus Christ would save only the individual soul” (63). Through church and school, Thelma is, like Laura, torn between societies, between a Native community centred around the collective, and a society and religion that tell her to do the exact opposite, to only think about herself.

With the help of the third-person omniscient narrator that re-configures the story about Tayo’s upbringing, we can trace Tayo’s trauma back to the abusive assimilation his mother and Thelma underwent. Laura was taught self-hatred and self-contempt by Western people when she was in school. In turn, she drowns her sorrows in alcohol, an act leading her to neglect her own child, Tayo, and eventually to her death. Similarly, Thelma has been taught stories about the shameful, deplorable, and inferior ways of the Indians. And, like Laura, she has developed self-hatred and self-contempt that have turned into excessive shame—of which Tayo is the primary target. Not only does Tayo internalise the shame Thelma directs at him, but he also learns from her the same stories she herself was taught in boarding school and church, stories about the deplorable ways of the Indians. In these ways, neglect and shame get passed on to Tayo and constitute a kind of colonial trauma: he believes that he is the cause of the shame and pain in the family, and he develops self-contempt and self-hatred. Healing Tayo and the broader Laguna community by correcting this kind of colonial thinking is in many ways the aim of the novel.

To do so, the novel suggests alternative ways of thinking and being, offered through the characters of Uncle Josiah, Grandma, and the healer Betonie. They all have ways of being that cause joy, balance, and harmony, something that comes to counter the abuse and neglect Tayo has suffered. Over the course of the novel, Tayo either thinks about stories that Uncle Josiah

and Grandma have told him, or the novel jumps back in time to when Uncle Josiah or Grandma is telling Tayo a story, a part of the narrative style where stories are broken up and unfolded in a non-chronological order. Stylistically, by permeating the novel with their stories in this way, Silko reminds us of the importance of Uncle Josiah and Grandma's stories to repair and heal Tayo's state of being.

One time, while out filling some water barrels for some animals because there is a drought, Uncle Josiah tells Tayo that "there are some things worth more than money" (42). He points towards "the springs...around the narrow canyon", and says to Tayo that "this is where we come from, see. This sand, this stone, these trees, the vines, all the wildflowers. This earth keeps us going" (42). He then reminds Tayo that "the dust and the wind...are part of life too, like the sun and the sky. You don't swear at them. It's people, see. They're the ones. The old people used to say that droughts happen when people forget, when people misbehave" (42). Immediately after Uncle Josiah's story, the novel inserts the first section of the major myth-poem that deals with the drought, sickness, and broken relationships between people and land. This myth-poem adds to our understanding of Uncle Josiah's story in the prose. It is an example of how form and content work together to influence ways of thinking and being in order to create positive, accurate Native identities, like Brave Heart and DeBruyn have argued is necessary.

Another time, when Tayo is young and "swatting flies in the kitchen with a willow switch", Uncle Josiah asks Tayo what he is doing (93). Tayo "point[s] proudly to a pile of dead flies on the kitchen floor", and tells Uncle Josiah that "our teacher...said they are bad and carry sickness" (93). But Uncle "Josiah look[s] at them and shake[s] his head", and he tells Tayo a story about "greenbottle fly" and how he went "asking forgiveness for the people" (93). Ever since, Uncle Josiah says, "the people have been grateful for what the fly did for us" (93). Tayo drops "the willow switch...on the floor by his feet", and with a chocked voice he asks Uncle Josiah "what will happened now?" (93-94). Uncle Josiah

answers: “I think we will be okay...None of them were greenbottle flies—only some of his cousins. People make mistakes. The flies know that. That’s how the greenbottle fly first came around anyway. To help the people who had made some mistakes” (94). Uncle Josiah then hugs the boy and tells him: “Next time, just remember the story” (94). Immediately after Josiah’s story, Silko inserts another section of the major myth-poem, a section exploring how Greenbottle fly came to help the people in Laguna. This is another example of how myth and prose work together in *Ceremony* to re-indigenise.

Uncle Josiah offers stories about connectedness between people and land, and forgiveness. Instead of “cursing the barren dry land”, like Emo does, Uncle Josiah reminds Tayo about people’s interconnectedness with the land, and that “the dust and the wind” are a part of life too (56, 42). And the way Uncle Josiah reminds Tayo about people’s relationship with the land, how it is invaluable and indispensable, teaches Tayo about an inextricable connection with the land, the very opposite of the stories creating a desire for “San Diego” and “white women” (56). In the beginning, Tayo sees flies as a nuisance because his teacher told him. But Uncle Josiah offers an alternative story, one that provides balance, equilibrium, and harmony. Uncle Josiah’s responses counter Western responses in the novel. Instead of mocking and potentially punishing Tayo like the teachers in school, Uncle Josiah gives him a hug. The major-myth poem in the novel combines with Josiah’s stories to emphasise the importance of Josiah’s wisdom: the myth-poem slowly unfolds to us how and why reverence and interconnectedness lead to well-being.

Uncle Josiah represents a masculinity that embraces tenderness and compassion: his stories, like Uncle Josiah himself, provide tenderness and love that counter moments of humiliation, mockery, and violence. By juxtaposing the tender and compassionate ways of Uncle Josiah, a man who is happy and prosperous, with the self-loathing and anger inherent in people like Emo—a man who believes that his power and masculinity come from exerting

power onto others—the novel attempts to decolonise our perception of masculinity, showing that a masculinity embracing tenderness and compassion leads to happy and vigorous people.

The character of Uncle Josiah's manifests what Linda Hogan refers to as an indigenous "belief system" (Murray). He represents Native ways of knowing, and his knowledge arises from centuries old relationships with Laguna land and wisdom passed down through generations. The novel teaches us that Uncle Josiah's Native wisdom is real and accurate through his attempt to breed his own cattle. At first, Uncle Josiah decides to study cattle breeding by reading books Western scientists have written. But when Uncle Josiah reads "the books the extension agent had loaned to him," he realises that the content of these books is so "stupid" that "he wasn't sure that he was understanding it right" (69). He decides that he and Tayo, his cattle breeding assistant, will "have to do things in...[their] own way" (69). Rocky, Tayo's cousin, is obsessed with Western science, and, hearing Josiah talk about his books, he says that "those books are written by scientists...[who] know everything there is to know about beef cattle" (69). He then tells Uncle Josiah: "that's the trouble with the way the people around here have always done things—they never knew what they were doing" (69-70). Influenced by Western ideas and ways of thinking, Rocky does not understand the land like Uncle Josiah does. Uncle Josiah sees that the books "were written by white people who did not think about drought or winter blizzards or dry thistles, which the cattle had to live with" (69). Uncle Josiah, unlike Rocky and the Western scientists, understands that he needs "special cattle, not the weak, soft Herefords that grew thin and died from eating thistle and burned-off cactus during the drought" (68). With the way Uncle Josiah is, because of his knowledge arising from a long relationship of respect and interconnectedness with the land, successfully able to breed cattle, the novel exemplifies how Uncle Josiah's Native ways of knowing—his system of beliefs—can be more intelligent and understanding of land and beings.

Like Uncle Josiah, so too does Grandma offer Tayo stories with Laguna ways of thinking and being. At one point, the novel brings us from post-war back to pre-war Laguna. Unlike the opening pages of the novel, which were filled with images of knots and entanglements to indicate Tayo's sickness, an imagery of spider-webs—delicate pattern and designs—permeates this section of the novel, indicating Tayo's well-being: Tayo walks into a canyon, he sees a spider coming out from between the rocks, and he watches how “she drink[s] from the edge of the pool, careful to keep the delicate sacs on her abdomen out of the water” (87). When she is done drinking, “she retrace[s] her path, leaving faint crisscrossing patterns in the fine yellow sand”, patterns reminding us of how Spider-Woman weaves all life in a fabric of interconnection (87). Seeing the spider, Tayo “remember[s] stories about her”, stories that Grandma had told him, such as the story about the time “Spider Woman had told Sun Man how to win the storm clouds back from the Gambler so they would be free again and bring rain and snow to the people” (87).

Tayo then thinks about how, in school, “the science teacher had explained what superstition was, and then held the textbook up for the class to see the true source of explanation” (87). He had “studied those books, and he had no reasons to believe in the stories any more. The science books explained cause and effects” (87). But Tayo remembers another story that Grandma told him, a story that counters the Western stories told by his teachers: “back in time immemorial, things were different, the animals could talk to human beings and many magical things still happened” (87). Tayo realises that he has never lost

the feeling he ha[s] in his chest when she speak[s] those words, as she doe[s] each time she tell[s] them stories; and he still felt it was true, despite all they had taught him in school—that long long ago things *had* been different, and human beings could understand what the animals said, and once the Gambler had trapped the storm clouds on his mountaintop (87).

Immediately after Tayo thinks about Grandma's stories, Silko inserts a myth-poem about Spider-Woman and the Gambler in order to contextualise the story in the prose.

These portions of the novel shows both how abusive assimilation policies have made Tayo doubt traditional Laguna stories, and also how much those stories remain a part of him. These stories also help make a clearer connection between the verse and the prose portions of the novel, connected by tales of drought, and the relationship between humans, gods, and land. This may help readers identify with Tayo. It certainly draws the reader closer into the narrative and this way it works to decolonize the mind (Tayo's and ours). The novel thus offers a response to Western stories of science of superstition, suggesting that Laguna ways of seeing the world are real and accurate even if Western people do not accept them.

The novel as a whole tries to heal Laguna by countering the harmful effects of colonialism, in part by using itself as a space for juxtaposing the well-being of Native characters against the suffering of Westernised characters. But it is not before the end of the novel that we as readers, as well as Tayo, come to understand that Tayo's sickness relates to Westernised ideas integrated into Native identities. To guide protagonist and reader towards this realisation, the novel introduces a powerful medicine man with a modern approach. Subsequently, in the novel's second half, Tayo himself becomes a cultural role model that embodies and exemplifies how re-indigenisation can be an antidote to colonial and historical trauma.

But before we meet Betonie, *Ceremony* first introduces Ku'oosh, the old medicine man recommended by Tayo's Grandma. Ku'oosh represents old, traditional ways of healing. Ku'oosh speaks "softly, using the old dialect full of sentences that...[are] involuted with explanations of their own origins, as if nothing the old man said were his own but all had been said before and he was only there to repeat it" (31). When Tayo tries to tell Ku'oosh about his problems, Ku'oosh shakes "his head slowly and make[s] a low humming sound in his throat"



(33). He tells Tayo that “there are some things we can’t cure like we used to...not since the white people came” (33, 35). Tayo comes to realise that the white world “was all too alien [for Ku’oosh] to comprehend” (33). The way in which Ku’oosh repeats what other people before him have said symbolises the static nature of his traditional ways. Neither Ku’oosh nor his approach towards illness have changed to accommodate new circumstances: the arrival of the white people, and the white’s World War. Ku’oosh does not understand the new world that has caused Tayo’s sickness, and because of this he is unable to help Tayo.

In the middle of the novel, Tayo, still sick, seeks out a modern, more powerful medicine man. A half-breed like Tayo, his power arises from his ability to understand the Laguna world as well as the Western world. His name is Betonie, and he re-configures Tayo’s trauma and puts it into a cosmological context, which helps Tayo understand how and why Western people’s ways of being are harmful and ultimately returns Tayo to indigenous ways of being.

Betonie is very different from Ku’oosh. He represents a mixture of traditional Native ways, ways of being that existed before the arrival of white people, and the contemporary world that includes white people. Like Tayo, Betonie has green eyes, indicating that he is a mixture, part Native and part Mexican. Unlike Ku’oosh, who speaks in a “childish” way, “interspersed with English words”, indicating Ku’oosh’s unfamiliarity with the English language, Betonie speaks English fluently, indicating his familiarity with the white world that has caused Tayo’s sickness (31, 31-32).

The items Tayo first sees when he enters Betonie’s place further emphasises Betonie’s hybridity. He sees traditional items, like “a great variety of herb and root” and “mountain sage,” but also modern items, such as “newspapers” and “Woolworth bags” (110). He even sees “old hides sewn into boxes bound in brass” (110). The hides symbolise traditional Native ways that existed before the Europeans came, and the brass, brought to America by the coloniser, symbolises the white world. The way the hides and the brass are parts of the same

boxes in order to enrich their quality symbolises a potential for a mutually beneficially form of co-existence between Native Americans and Western people, as if Betonie understands how all people can live together in prosperity and harmony.

Unlike Ku'oosh's, Betonie's wisdom is powerful, and it helps Tayo: Uncle Josiah's cattle were stolen when Tayo was in the war, and Tayo believes that his uncle "died because there was no one to help him search for the cattle after they were stolen" (114). Tayo is trying to recover the cattle as a final token of respect, but so far he has been unable to do so. With Betonie's wisdom, this changes.

Betonie uses his indigenous wisdom to re-configure Tayo's vision of Uncle Josiah in the jungle, the vision that the novel presented to us in its opening pages: Betonie explains to Tayo that he has

an important place in this story...it isn't surprising that you saw him there. You saw who they were. Thirty thousand years ago they were not strangers. You saw what the evil had done: you saw the witchery ranging as wide as this world... I'm beginning to see...something very important...This has been going on for a long long time. They will try to stop you from completing the ceremony. (114-115)

Betonie offers a cosmological, all-inclusive explanation to Tayo's vision and sickness. He understands how Spider-Woman's fabric of interconnection works: that all beings are interconnected in a great web of life. Betonie teaches us that an evil cosmic force called the witchery works to destroy this delicate web of existence, in part by tricking people into believing that they are not connected to each other, something that makes people kill each other. Westerners' need to exert power and violence over others indicates their remove from, and lack of understanding of the web of life. By explaining Tayo's vision in terms of the

witchery, Betonie begins to reconfigure the opening pages of the novel: Tayo's vision of Uncle Josiah is not a sign of sickness, what Western doctors put in terms of "battle fatigue", but rather an ability to see how the world really works (7). This reconfiguration is not initially clear, but slowly unfolded to us throughout the second part of the novel.

At first, Tayo rejects Betonie's Native wisdom. But when Betonie tells Tayo: "we all have been waiting for help a long time. But it never has been easy. The people must do it. You must do it," something changes inside Tayo:

Tayo's stomach clenched around the words like knives stuck into his guts. There was something large and terrifying in the old man's words. He wanted to yell at the medicine man, to yell the things the white doctors had yelled at him—that he had to think only of himself, and not about the others, that he would never get well as long as he used words like 'we' and 'us.' *But he had known the answer all along, even while doctors were telling him he could get well and he was trying to believe them:* medicine didn't work that way, because the world didn't work that way. His sickness was only part of something larger, and his cure would be found only in something great and inclusive of everything. (116, my italics)

Tayo's rejection of the Western doctor's diagnosis, and his acknowledgement of Betonie's Native wisdom, are his first important steps towards recovery, towards becoming a cultural role model for us as readers. This section of the novel marks a crucial shift because it begins to teach us the kind of actions that Tayo must take in order to heal himself—and by extension the actions we ourselves can take to overcome historical and colonial trauma.

Native wisdom offers the guidance that Tayo will need to negotiate his anger, guilt, and isolation. Tayo looks into the distance and sees land that Western people have stolen from Indians, he feels an anger inside him and he says to Betonie: "they took almost everything,

didn't they?" (117). But Betonie teaches Tayo that such an anger is harmful and futile: he "shake[s] his head slowly" and says:

We always come back to that, don't we? It was planned that way. For all the anger and the frustration. And for the guilt too. Indians wake up every morning of their lives to see the land which was stolen, still there, within reach, its theft being flaunted. And the desire is strong to make things right, to take back what was stolen and to stop them from destroying what they have taken. But you see, Tayo, we have done as much fighting as we could do and still survive. (118)

The anger that Betonie talks about seems to echo what Brave Heart terms "survivors guilt" (Wakiksuyapi, 247). Guiding us in this way towards an understanding of how such anger and guilt can be counteracted, Betonie's wisdom becomes medicine for protagonist and reader alike.

The novel inserts a myth-poem that works in a powerful symbiosis with the prose in its attempt to counter this kind of guilt. It explains in greater detail to us why and how Betonie's wisdom is real and accurate. The myth-poem is about the witchery, and it is inserted into the precise centre of the novel, with portions of it italicised in a way that emphasises the importance of this myth.

Long time ago / in the beginning / there were no white people in this world / there was nothing European./ And this world might have gone on like that / except for one thing: / witchery. / This world was already complete / even without white people.../ Then it happened. / These witch people got together...for a contest / in dark things" (122-123).

The winner of the contest tells a story of how the witchery “set in motion” the creation of white people, detailing the devastation they will bring (124-127):

*And those they do not kill / will die anyway / at the destruction they see / at the loss /  
at the loss of the children / the loss will destroy the rest. // Stolen rivers and mountains  
/ the stolen land will eat their hearts / and jerk their mouths from the Mother. / The  
people will starve. / They will bring terrible diseases the people have never known. /  
Entire tribes will die out / covered with festered sores / shitting blood / vomiting  
blood. / Corpses for our work. (126)*

By combining Native wisdom with atrocities of the past, this myth powerfully takes on the form of historical fiction in an attempt to argue how and why Western wisdom should be rejected in favour of Native wisdom. It suggests that Western ways of being will only lead to death and destruction. The myth-poem draws a strong parallel between Western ways of being and the witchery, as if Western people are acting out its agenda.

Like Betonie warned Tayo against feeling guilty for the land stolen by Western people, so does this myth-poem remind us that guilt and anger can be as harmful as guns and diseases: “*those they do not kill / will die anyway / at the destruction they see / ...stolen rivers and mountains / the stolen land will eat their hearts / and jerk their mouths from the Mother* (126). In this way, form and content combine to counteract “survivors guilt” (Brave Heart, “Wakiksuyapi”, 247).

This section of the novel has another powerful function as well: Western creation narratives of original sin have led to the delegation of women to a role of silence. Silko has argued that Laguna society were more matriarchal than not (Seyersted 18-19). Silko and Allen have explained the consequences of a patriarchal Western culture being imposed on Laguna societies, including the re-configuration of the role of women to a role of subordination (Allen

13-30, 185-190, Seyersted 18-19). *Ceremony* works against this colonial re-configuration by offering a very different Laguna creation myth, one that does not genderise. Quite the contrary, it emphasises that the gender of the ‘sinner’—the one responsible for spreading the evil (the witchery) in the world—is *not* important: “no one ever knew where this witch came from...if it was a woman or a man. / But the important thing was...this one just told them to listen [to]...a story” (124). In these ways, this myth-poem, embedded in the narrative sequence of Betonie’s healing ceremonies, offers a powerful antidote to the harmful colonial legacy.

Betonie exerts a powerful influence on Tayo, and this is evident in the way Tayo changes his way of thinking. Until now, Tayo has only searched for the cattle in the “south-going direction they had always gone” (173). However, Betonie teaches Tayo that it is necessary to change ways of thinking and being to accommodate for changing circumstances—like the arrival of white people. Betonie, as a medicine man, has made changes to his ceremonies:

at one time, the ceremonies as they had been performed were enough for the way the world was then. But after the white people came, elements in this world began to shift; and it became necessary to create new ceremonies...only *growth* keeps the ceremonies strong...The witchery works to scare people, to make them fear growth, [but] things which don’t shift and grow are dead things. [Without growth] the witchery will triumph, and the people will be no more (116-117, my italics).

To guide Tayo towards growth, Betonie draws in the sand: “remember these stars...I’ve seen them and I’ve seen the spotted cattle; I’ve seen a mountain and I’ve seen a woman” (141).

The mountain Betonie draws is a scared mountain to the north—and by suggesting the cattle is in the north, he offers an alternative path for Tayo. Powerfully, Tayo will encounter all the

elements in Betonie's vision, and in this way the novel again exemplifies how Betonie's Native wisdom is real and accurate. Each encounter teaches Tayo, and us as readers, about Laguna epistemology—influencing reader and protagonist alike in an attempt to re-indigenise.<sup>6</sup>

The first encounter is with the woman Ts'eh, and many scholars have argued that she is a Laguna creatrix figure and an embodiment of the sacred mountain (Allen 95-98; Nelson and Nelson 122). Tayo's encounter with her symbolises his growing reconnection with this epistemology. Several scholars have explored the significance of the encounter between these two characters, among them Allen and Delilah Orr, who have argued that Ts'eh helps Tayo reconnect with the feminine aspect of himself—which is essential to his healing (95-98; 73-86).

Even as many scholars have commented on the importance of the meeting between these two characters, I'd like to call specific attention to the stylistic choices Silko makes to emphasise the significance of the encounter. Silko inserts a drawing into the novel when Tayo meets Ts'eh: it is a star-map, and it visually displays the stars that he sees the night he meets her. They are the very same stars that Betonie drew in the sand during his ceremony to guide Tayo. By inserting this star-map into the prose, the novel reminds us of the power of Betonie's Native wisdom.

Furthermore, the myths and prose intertwine in this section of the novel. The myths are set apart from the prose and parallel Tayo's story. At certain parts of Tayo's story, the actions in the myths intertwine with Tayo's lived experience, as when Tayo participates in

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<sup>6</sup> The impact of Betonie's wisdom seems immediate: in the first half of the novel, Tayo thought of his vision of Uncle Josiah in the jungle as a "hallucination"—a word suggesting something deceptive and false, and carrying connotations of sickness (7). However, he now thinks of his vision of Uncle Josiah as a *vision*—a word suggesting that it is real and accurate. This shift in perception marks Betonie's influence and his success.

Betonie's ceremony, and when he meets Ts'eh, serving to emphasise the importance of these encounters.

This fusion of myth and prose happens just after Tayo has slept with Ts'eh, as if Tayo now has reconnected with the earth—Ts'eh herself symbolising the earth, as other scholars have explored (Nelson and Nelson 128). Tayo walks outside Ts'eh's house and he sees “the sun...[coming] over the edge of the horizon” (169). He then thinks about the song “the people had...for the sunrise” (169). Just then, Silko inserts a part of the sunrise-prayer into her novel. Just after the indented prayer, the prose returns, and Tayo thinks to himself that he “repeated the words as he remembered them, not sure if they were the right ones, but feeling they were right” (169). This deliberate placement of the myth-poem prayer allows us to read it as being part of myth and prose at the same time, and it exemplifies how prose and myth intertwine in the ceremonial healing of Tayo (169).

Importantly, the Sunrise-prayer that intertwines with Tayo's experience is a part of the Sunrise-prayer that Silko uses to structure her novel, with parts of it set at the beginning, the middle, and at the end. In this way, the “Sunrise” prayer frames *Ceremony* as a whole, while also being a part of Tayo's lived experience. The insertion of the sunrise prayer into this section of the novel suggests that Tayo's meeting with this woman is an important part of his journey of reconnection: at the beginning of the novel, he is sick; at this section, he is on a path towards recovery; by the end of the novel, he is well. Furthermore, Tayo thinks to himself that “he ended the prayer with ‘sunrise’ because he knew the Dawn people began and ended all their words with ‘sunrise’”, and with this Silko explains her own integration of the Sunrise-prayer into *Ceremony*, positioning her novel as a prayer in the form of a story (169). By intertwining myth and prose in this way, Silko weaves ‘tribal consciousness’ into her novel, and this strengthens *Ceremony*'s potential to function as a powerful cultural artefact that creates and shapes identities, like Brave Heart and DeBruyn have argued is necessary.



Tayo finds the cattle in the north—just like Betonie told him—and he “think[s] about...the cattle and how they have ended up on Floyd Lee’s land” (177). He wonders to himself why it is that

if he had seen the cattle on a land-grant land or in some Acoma’s corral, he wouldn’t have heisted to say ‘stolen’. But something inside him make[s] him hesitate to say it now that the cattle were on a white man’s ranch. He had a crazy desire to believe that there had been some mistake, that Floyd Lee had gotten them innocently, maybe buying them from the real thieves. Why did he hesitate to accuse a white man of stealing but not a Mexican or an Indian? (177)

But Tayo comes to realise why he feels this way:

He knew then he had learned the lie by heart—the lie which they had wanted him to learn: only brown-skinned people were thieves; white people didn’t steal, because they always had the money to buy whatever they wanted...as long as people believed the lies, they would never be able to see what had been done to them or what they were doing to each other (177).

At this powerful section of the novel, through Tayo’s realisation, *Ceremony* teaches us that Western people create and use stories about Native Americans like tools of oppression that can be used to facilitate thievery. But with Tayo’s recognition and rejection of such stories, the novel begins to teach us how to recognise and counter them. The recognition and rejection of these types of stories about Native Americans is an important part of Tayo’s healing and of the overall re-indigenisation work the novel does in an attempt to counteract a harmful colonial legacy and restore well-being among Native Americans. In part because this kind of

recognition redirects us away from Westernized thinking that creates a harmful stereotype of Native Americans. Instead, the novel offers alternative ways of thinking in an attempt to create and shape positive and accurate identities.

The novel invokes a Laguna understanding of the world, the witchery, in order to explain how and why Western ways of being are harmful and wrong—to Western people and Indians alike.

The liars had fooled everyone, white people and Indians alike...If the white people never looked beyond the lie, to see that theirs was a nation built on stolen land, then they would never be able to understand how they had been used by the witchery; they would never know that they were still being manipulated by those who knew how to stir the ingredients together: white thievery and injustice boiling up the anger and hatred that would finally destroy the world: the starving against the fat, the colored against the white. The destroyers had only to set it into motion, and sit back to count the casualties. But it was more than a body count; the lies devoured white hearts, and for more than two hundred years white people had worked to fill their emptiness; they tried to glut the hollowness with patriotic wars and with great technology and the wealth it brought. And always they had been fooling themselves, and they knew it  
(177)

By suggesting that Western ways of being make white people suffer, the novel counters colonial oppression, suggesting that correcting injustice is in the interest of all parties involved.

The novel reminds us of the hardship involved in a journey of reconnection like the one Tayo undertakes. Tayo has to overcome a kind of paralysis: on Floyd Lee's land to recover the

cattle, Tayo feels “a strange paralysis accompan[y] his thoughts,” and a “sudden overwhelming fatigue” takes hold of him, making him fall “into the old pine needles and cones under a tree” (181). He begins to doubt whether he will be able to “find the cattle and get them out before the fence riders find the break” (180). In fact, he begins to doubt everything he has been told by Uncle Josiah, Betonie, and Ts’eh, and he thinks that maybe he should “ride like hell off the mountain,” that everything he had been a part of, “old Betonie and his stargazing, [and] the woman in her storm-pattern blanket,” was nothing but “crazy, the kind of old-time superstition the teachers at Indian school used to warn him about” (180-181). Tayo’s doubt becomes a reminder of the powerful and harmful influence that the Western world can have, and how hard it can be to escape its grip.

But the novel also offers a response of an epistemological order. As Tayo is suffering from fatigue, a mountain lion appears, an animal which, in Laguna epistemology, is associated with more-than-ordinary beings, as if scared powers are helping Tayo (Tyler 211). Like Ts’eh, the mountain lion has been interpreted as a physical manifestation of a cosmic force that presents itself to help Tayo. Tayo thinks about what Uncle Josiah taught him about respect and reverence for mountain lions, and he whispers “mountain lion, becoming what you are with each breath, your substance changing with the earth and the sky” (182). He then pours yellow pollen in its footprints, just like Uncle Josiah taught him to do when he was a child. At this moment Tayo sees the cattle, as if in response to his respect. The novel here exemplifies the power of traditional practices to counteract the kind of historical trauma Brave Heart and DeBruyn write about.

The mountain lion helps Tayo one more time: just after Tayo has taken cattle through Floyd Lee’s fence, he falls off his horse and is caught by some white rangers protecting Floyd Lee’s land. But Tayo is set free once the rangers discover the tracks of the mountain lion, and just as he is set free it starts to snow. The “snow...cover[s] everything, burying the mountain lion’s tracks and obliterating his scent” (190). A hunter then appears, with a mountain lion fur

on his head. This hunter takes Tayo back to his hut, the very place where Tayo met Ts'eh. The novel suggests that indigenous ways of being offer an interconnection with many forces in the universe, as if *everything* is connected in the great web of life. By understanding this section of the novel in combination with the novel's myth-poems—“as I tell the story / it will begin to happen”—we can understand the novel as offering an epistemological understanding in which humans benefit from their connections to and reverence for other forces in the universe (125). The extraordinary connection between the mountain lion, the hunter, and Ts'eh has led Delilah Orr to argue that the mountain lion and the hunter are different manifestations of the same sacred spirit (125). The way in which Tayo is surrounded by more-than-ordinary beings in the second half of the novel, and the frequency of their intervention, seems to indicate his reconnection to Laguna epistemology, what I'm calling his re-indigenization. Powerfully then, the novel suggests that re-indigenisation offers healing in many ways.

Having returned his uncle's cattle and gained indigenous wisdom—re-indigenised—Tayo's sickness has palliated: “the dreams had been terror at loss, at something lost forever; but nothing was lost; all was retained between the sky and the earth, and within himself” (204). The “terror at loss” that Tayo felt can be understood as a fear and isolation created by the loss of his mother and motherly love. But Tayo's re-indigenisation becomes the very antidote for this fear and isolation, offering him new terms in which to see himself in the world as interconnected and loved by many beings. Tayo has gained literal insight: “as far as he ca[n] see...the world i[s] alive,” and he can “feel the motion pushing out of the damp earth into the sunshine” (205). This is the kind of Native wisdom he was taught by Uncle Josiah, and that he regains from Ts'eh. He feels interconnected with and loved by all beings around him, and the earth itself is like a living organism with a heartbeat. Indigenous wisdom has also helped Tayo overcome the fear and anger that Betonie warned him against: Tayo has come to realise

that even if white people logged “the trees...killed the deer, bear, and mountain lions,” the land “could not be lost to them, because it was in their bones” (204). This way of thinking helps Tayo mediate the guilt and anger he has felt at the loss of land—the very same guilt and anger that seem to fuel Emo’s destructive anguish and self-hatred, echoed in the stories he tells about the stolen land. In these ways, re-indigenization, a cure of love and interconnectedness, becomes like an antidote to the legacy of colonialism—a very different cure than the isolation offered by Western doctors.

But Tayo’s well-being is not permanent, and his strength is tested when Ts’eh leaves him. Tayo must gain more Native wisdom if he is to fully heal himself. The novel sets up the final tests by invoking the white smoke imagery presented on the opening pages. It adds malignancy to it, and in the process it thoroughly juxtaposes a Laguna ‘all inclusive’ cure against the isolation and death offered by the Western doctors. Before leaving, Ts’eh warns Tayo that

death isn’t much...There are much worse things...The destroyers:<sup>7</sup> they work to destroy the feeling people have for each other...their highest ambition is to gut human beings while they are still breathing, to hold the heart still beating so the victim will never feel anything again. When they finish, you watch yourself from a distance and you can’t even cry—not even for yourself...they are all around now. Only destruction is capable of arousing a sensation, the remains of something alive in them; and each time they do it, the scar thickens and they feel less and less, yet still hungering for more. (213)

The novel then reminds us of the way Tayo felt when he was in the Los Angeles hospital, making a clear connection between the work of the destroyers and Tayo’s illness:

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<sup>7</sup> Ts’eh refers to the witchery and those who act according to the witchery as “the destroyers” (213).

[Tayo] recognised...the thick white skin that had enclosed him, silencing the sensation of living, the love as well as the grief; and he had been left with only the hum of the tissues that enclosed him. He never knew how long he had been lost there, in that hospital in Los Angeles. (213)

By making the connection between the destroyers, who want to destroy people's ability to feel, and the Western doctors who do so with their sedatives that "silence the sensation of living, the love as well as the grief" and make Tayo feel as if there is a "thick white skin" around him, the novel adds meaning to the powerful "white smoke" imagery presented on its opening pages, allowing us to understand Tayo's impaired state of being as being even more gruelling than death itself (213). In the process it emphasises the harmful consequences of a Western understanding of the world. *Ceremony* suggests that Tayo did not get well in the hospital because Western medicine and drugs only isolated Tayo from other people—even himself—and by doing so, it was serving the agenda of the witchery. This kind of medicine is the opposite of the kind Tayo really needs: he needs a form of medicine that helps him reconnect with people and land, including himself—like the medicine Uncle Josiah, Betonie, and Ts'eh give him in the form of Native stories.

Ts'eh also allows us to understand the isolation and contempt that Thelma and Laura were taught in school by white people as echoing the agenda of the witchery: it is the opposite of Spider-Woman's all-inclusive fabric of interconnection and reverence. In this way, the novel provides a cosmological force that also accounts for abusive boarding school policies as an explanation for Tayo's trauma and sickness, allowing us to position Tayo's trauma in both a broad cosmological and also a more specific context.

Additionally, her story adds meaning to Emo and Tayo's fight in the bar, set in the first half of the novel. Emo is one who "grow[s] from each killing," something that puts him

squarely on the side of the witchery (56). Tayo is just like Emo the day he stabs Emo: when Tayo feels that “he get[s] stronger with every jerk that Emo make[s]” he is like one of the destroyers. And when Tayo “doesn’t[] feel anything” after he has almost killed Emo, he is a victim of the witchery as well (58).

Ts’eh has a final warning for Tayo:

The end of the story. They want to change it. They want it to end here, the way all their stories end, encircling slowly to choke the life away. The violence of the struggle excites them, and the killing soothes them. They have their stories about us—Indian people who are only marking time and waiting for the end. And they would end this story right here, with you fighting to your death alone in these hills. (215)

Ts’eh warns Tayo that Emo will come and try to kill him, to change the story of his healing, and she leaves him (215-216). Her warning sets up Tayo’s final test, his encounter with Emo. In a repeat of earlier scenes, Harley and Leroy drive by and want Tayo to drink with them. At first, Tayo is happy to see them “and suddenly close to tears because they had come when he needed friends most” (221). But as before, Tayo turns suspicious when he is with Harley—the novel’s way of reminding us that Harley’s way of being is harmful to people and land. And *this* time, Tayo’s doubt is even more severe: “Harley and Leroy were his buddies. His Friends. But he was feeling something terrible inside, and his heart was beating hard now” (223).

One final time, Tayo caves to Harley’s pressure, and he tries to get well by drinking alcohol: “he gripp[s] the can tight, trying to squeeze away the shaking in his hands” (223). Drawing us into a situation that is very different from his encounter with Ts’eh, the novel teaches us that alcohol and Harley’s Westernised thinking are not what makes Tayo well. Instead, they make him worse:

He finished the beer...He had to relax to get hold of these thoughts before they scatted in all directions like a herd of sheep...these guys were his friends” (223).

The image of a ‘herd of sheep scattering’ is the opposite of the imagery invoked when Tayo was with Ts’eh—when he felt that his “mind i[s] holding all thoughts together in a single moment” (220). The scattering thus echoes the clutter and distortion of the entanglement and knots of the opening pages of the novel, when Tayo’s illness was at its height.

Through this imagery and Tayo’s suspicion about his “friends”, the novel shows that Harley’s influence distances Tayo from Laguna ways of being:

the truck’s motion and the beer were shooting; the steel and glass closed out everything. The sky, the land were distant then; trees and hills moved past the windshield glass like a movie film. (223)

Tayo feels that “the steel and the glass close[] out everything...the sky, the land...trees and hills” because Western ways of being and thinking separate people from land and nature and destroy interconnectedness. Harley inflicts this Western influence onto Tayo, so much so that despite being among “trees and hills” Tayo feels as isolated from them as if he were only watching “a movie film”.

Harley’s influence is so strong here that Tayo decides to

rest for a while, and not think about the ceremony. Otherwise, it would make him crazy and even suspicious of his friends; and without his friends he didn’t have a chance of completing the ceremony...he would hang around with Harley and Leroy; everyone would understand that: riding around, drinking with his buddies. They



wouldn't be suspicious then; they wouldn't think he was crazy. He'd just be another drunk Indian, that's all. (223-224)

With this brief but important encounter between Harley and Tayo, the novel tests Tayo and exemplifies the alluring yet harmful force of the Western world. In fact, Tayo himself even realises this: "it...[is] easy to get lost in this place of theirs" (223). But the novel doesn't end here, and we anticipate Tayo's final encounter with Emo and the forces of the witchery.

Tayo wakes up hungover in "the hills northwest of Cañoncito" (223). These hills have special significance as the place where uranium was mined to make the first nuclear bombs. At this moment Tayo seems to waffle: "it was difficult...to call up the feelings the stories had, the feelings of Ts'eh and old Betonie. It was easier to feel and believe the rumours. Crazy. Crazy Indian. Seeing things. Imagining things" (225). But as Tayo is climbing, he comes to an essential realisation: "suddenly it hit him, in the belly, and spread to his chest in a single surge: he knew then that they were not his friends but had turned against him, and the knowledge left him hollow and dry inside" (225).

Tayo's crucial realisation makes him climb down the hill again, and he ends up outside the shaft to the uranium mine, where he "crawl[s] through...strands of barbed wire" (225, 227). Here, Silko inserts local history of the uranium extraction that turns the barbed-wire that Tayo crawls through into a reminder for what was lost and how the Native people living in these areas were bereft of their ancestral lands (226). Silko's use of the older Spanish name Cebolleta, as opposed to the more recently imposed English name Seboyeta, is itself a small act of narrative resistance to colonial imposition.

By setting Tayo's final struggle on this site, and by inserting the history into the larger story about Tayo, the novel remembers the illegal mining and destruction of Native American territory that took place during the second World War.

The one-page story about the uranium extraction is like several other short stories inserted into the larger story about Tayo. Yet it is set apart from the larger story about Tayo in the way it is narrated. Unlike the pages before and after this short story, in which it is overtly clear that we are taking part in Tayo's mind, this short story *deliberately* avoids Tayo's mind and feelings:

waves of heat caught him, and his legs and lungs were vapor without sensation; only his memory of running and breathing kept him moving and alive. He stumbled and ran behind the sun, not following but dragged with it across arroyos, over mesas and hills.  
(227)

In this way, style and content seem to set this story apart. But it is difficult to miss the parallels between various forms of witchery and the destructive forces that Tayo and the Laguna must continue to combat. This ambivalence exemplifies the kind of interpretative work the novel forces us to do, teaching us to draw connections between the many different stories intertwined with each other. The narrative choice of allowing us as readers to make multiple connections between these stories is an important part of the novel's overall decolonisation potential.

Tayo models this very kind of thinking when he makes this important realisation:

From the jungles of his dreaming he recognized why the Japanese voices had merged with Laguna voices, with Josiah's voice and Rocky's voice; the lines of cultures and worlds were drawn in flat dark lines on fine light sand; converging in the middle of the witchery's final ceremonial painting. From that time on, human beings were one clan again, united by the fate the destroyers had planned for all of them, for all living things; united by a circle of death that devoured people in cities twelve thousand miles

away, victims who had never known these mesas, who had never seen the delicate colors of the rocks which boiled up their slaughter.

He walked to the mine shaft slowly, the feeling became overwhelming: the pattern of the ceremony was completed there. (228)

The “dark lines on fine light sand” is the imagery both of a ceremonial circle and of a spiderweb. But it is also the imagery of stone and earth dug and tilted on sand and sandrock to make the uranium mine. In this way the ceremonial sand painting made in preparation for a ceremony offers a counter image to the mine dug in order to create the first nuclear bomb. By emphasising that Tayo’s final battle against the witchery takes place on the site where uranium was extracted, surrounded by the sites where the first bomb was developed and detonated, while also being in the heart of a web, Silko directly links the final ceremony of the witchery with nuclear weapons, as if nuclear weapons were the final tools that the witchery would use to destroy the world. Both sets of images exert influence on the world, and their contest represents the culmination of Tayo’s journey. By juxtaposing nuclear technology and the witchery’s final ceremony against Tayo’s ceremony and the interconnected strength of a spiderweb, the novel again faces off Western and Native epistemologies. Perhaps we can even understand nuclear weapons themselves as being the enactment of the witchery’s final ceremony: it is what will destroy the world. Because of the intricate link Silko creates, scholars have argued that Silko’s novel overall can be read as a “nuclear dissent in the American Southwest” (Matsunaga 68).

Tayo’s recognition that “the Japanese voices had merged with Laguna voices” suggests that he now understands his vision in the epistemological terms that Betonie told him. His vision is not a sign of sickness or insanity, like white people believe, but instead a sign of understanding that all humans are interconnected in the face of a common enemy: the witchery and its will to make people fight and kill each other.

Walking to the mine shaft, Tayo realises that “the pattern of the ceremony i[s] completed there” (228). This shift in perception, by which Tayo understands the world around him in terms of Laguna epistemology, indicates a level of re-indigenisation and suggests that his ceremony is coming to completion. Betonie’s ceremony has certainly helped Tayo understand himself and his visions in terms of the witchery. But the conflict of Tayo’s final encounter with Emo is part of another ceremony, the witchery’s final ceremony.

But before the final ceremony begins, the novel shows us the difference in ways of thinking between Native and Western people: unlike Western people who use uranium to destroy, Tayo uses it to understand: he picks up an ore rock and studies it: “the gray stone was streaked with powdery yellow uranium; bright and alive as pollen; veins of sooty black formed lines with the yellow, making mountain ranges and rivers across the stone”—the stone embodies life and vitality (228-229). Unlike the U.S. Government who saw uranium as a military weapon, Tayo sees it as a force of life. He then thinks of how some people “had taken these beautiful rocks from deep within earth and laid them in a monstrous design, realizing destruction on a scale only *they* could have dreamed” (229). The way in which some people have taken something harmless and beautiful and turned it into something destructive helps Tayo understand that stories work in the same way:

[Tayo] crie[s] at the relief he feel[s] at finally seeing the pattern, the way all the stories fit together—the old stories, the war stories, their stories—to become the story that was still being told. He was not crazy; he had never been crazy. He had only seen and heard the world as it always was: no boundaries, only transitions through all distances and time. (229)

At this culminating moment of the novel, Tayo realises that stories, like rocks, are part of a larger, symbiotic pattern. They are created and put together for different purposes—some with

the intent to create and heal, like Uncle Josiah's stories, and some with the intent to destroy and tear, like the witchery's stories, enacted through people like Emo. The novel as a whole also works in this way, offering itself as a story that tries to counteract harmful stories offered by Western people, in an attempt to shape and influence identities in a positive way, just like *Brave Heart* and DeBruyn have argued is necessary.

*Ceremony* has one more thing to teach us: how to counter violence. To do so the novel draws us into a situation that seems very parallel to the day Tayo stabbed Emo in the bar. To lure Tayo to the fight, Emo and Pinkie torture Harley: they "cut the whorl from the bottom of his big toe," causing "Harley [to] scream hoarsely" (23). But Emo only encourages Harley to scream: "scream loud so he can hear you", and he yells: "look at this, you half-breed! White son of a bitch! You can't hide from this! Look! Your buddy, Harley" (233, 234). Like the day in the bar, Emo provokes Tayo, and Tayo responds:

[he] could not endure it any longer. He was certain his own sanity would be destroyed if he did not stop them and all the suffering and dying they caused—the people incinerated and exploded, and little children asleep on the streets outside Gallup bars. He was not strong enough to stand by and watch any more. He would rather die himself. (234)

With a screwdriver in his hand, Tayo "visualise[s] the contours of Emo's skull; the GI haircut exposed thin bone at the temples, bone that would flex slightly before it gave way under the thrust of the steel edge" (234). Even now, in this late part of the novel where Tayo in many ways has returned to indigenous ways of thinking, he is still vulnerable to the idea that violence is an answer. But the novel redirects him: just as Tayo is about to leap at Emo, the wind stirs up. Like the day Tayo was captured by some rangers, there seems to be cosmic

forces at play to guide Tayo through his encounter against Emo, and by extension the witchery:

The wind came suddenly and...made his sweat go cold. This was the time. But his fingers were numb, and he fumbled with the screwdriver as he tried to rub warmth back into his hands. There would be no one to help Emo. But Tayo stayed on his knees in the shadows. (234-235)

With this cosmic intervention Tayo realises how fatal and an act of aggression would have been:

it had been a close call. The witchery had almost ended the story according to its plan; Tayo had almost jammed the screwdriver into Emo's skull the way the witchery had wanted...Their deadly ritual for the autumn solstice would have been completed by him...He would have been another victim, a drunk Indian war veteran settling an old feud; and the Army doctors would say that the indications of this end had been there all along, since his release from the mental ward at the Veterans' Hospital in Los Angeles. The white people would shake their heads, more proud than sad that it took a white man to survive in their world and that these Indians couldn't seem to make it. At home the people would blame liquor, the Army, and the war, but the blame on the whites would never match the vehemence the people would keep in their own bellies, reserving the greatest bitterness and blame for themselves, for one of themselves they could not save. (234-235)

Instead, the novel rejects these stories, and Tayo ends up

go[ing] back ... where [Ts'eh] had shown him the plant. He would gather the seeds for her and plant them with great care in places near sandy hills... The plants would grow there like the story, strong and translucent as the stars... He dreamed with his eyes open that he was wrapped in a blanket in the back of Josiah's wagon, crossing the sandy flat below Paguate Hill... Josiah was driving the wagon, old Grandma was holding him, and Rocky whispered 'my brother.' They were taking him home. (236)

By juxtaposing these sets of stories and ways of acting, the novel tries to show us that violence is the work of the witchery, and not the best way to counteract violence. As Tayo realises this, he turns into a very strong cultural role model: he has come to reject Western ways of being and instead taken on a peaceful and reverent indigenous way of being in the world.

The imagery of Tayo in the wagon with his uncle taking him home suggests that Tayo has completed his journey of reconnection. He is "home" to an indigenous way of thinking and being in the world. The way he dreams about Rocky whispering "my brother" now replaces the "dreams at terror at loss", as if his new epistemology allows him to think of Uncle Josiah and Rocky as close to him in different ways, because he has learned that there are "no boundaries, only transitions through all distances and time" (204, 236, 229).

Tayo has fully healed himself. By re-indigenizing his mind, he no longer feels isolated and alone. He has come to understand that he is not crazy, that the doubt and hesitation that made his mind entangled and confused—a doubt and confusion originating from all the stories he has heard about the deplorable ways of the Indians—are not real and accurate. His doubt, fear, and isolation have been replaced by feelings of interconnectedness, acceptance, and love.

The novel uses Laguna epistemological explanations to aid us in our understanding of how and why re-indigenisation is healthful to Tayo. It teaches us how and why Western

people act like they do. By explaining the actions of Western people in term of the witchery, we come to understand them as victims of a great evil in the world that seeks to destroy all life. But Indians are wise, they do not act in this way because they understand how this evil works: it isolates people from land and beings, including themselves, and this creates violence, contempt, and neglect—the very opposite of Native ways of reverence, love, and interconnectedness that make people well. Indians like Uncle Josiah and Betonie use stories to counteract the witchery, and these heal Tayo.

Such an understanding brings us back to the initial pages of the novel, on which Silko writes: “I will tell you something about stories, / [he said] / They aren’t just entertainment. / Don’t be fooled. / They are all we have, you see, / all we have to fight off / illness and death” (2). These lines arguably become more meaningful once the novel is read a whole, and this is symptomatic of *Ceremony* in general: it is patterned by a web of stories interwoven into other stories that can only be fully understood once the novel is read as a whole. Structurally then, we as readers are challenged in the same way as Tayo: we too must learn how “all stories fit together”, even if just for this novel (229).

Ending with a myth-poem about the witchery and the final section of the Sunrise prayer, the novel asserts Tayo’s well-being:

Whirling darkness / has come back on itself. / It keeps all its witchery / to itself. // It doesn’t open its eyes / with its witchery. // It has stiffened / with the effects of its own witchery. // It is dead for now. / It is dead for now. / It is dead for now. / It is dead for now...Sunrise, / accept this offering, / Sunrise. (242-243)



## *Solar Storms*

Though written a generation after *Ceremony*, and centred on a separate Native community, Linda Hogan's 1994 novel *Solar Storms* seems to echo the idea that narrative can heal the legacy of colonialism. Both novels offer narrative as a mode of cultural conversation. *Solar Storms* draws its readers into a journey of reconnection that is similar to Tayo's in *Ceremony*. But Hogan's novel is also very different. Even as there is a symbiosis between form and content that direct the novel's journey of reconnection, Hogan's novel achieves these aims in a different way than *Ceremony*.

Hogan makes use of italicised voices inserted into the first-person narration of the main character in the novel, the young woman Angel Wing. With this technique, the novel allows several voices to contribute to Angel's narration. We see her gain broader perspectives, and we are also taught to remember and grieve her family's violent past. The novel uses its narrative mode to suggest that the colonial violence suffered by the Wing women (and others) is not unique, but rather shared by a larger Native American community.

Though it centres on Angel's reconnection with the women in her family, Hogan's novel also creates masculine cultural role models that are strong as well as tender and compassionate. Like *Ceremony*, this novel aims to restore an indigenous understanding of masculinity, one that embraces tenderness and compassion as desirable qualities. These cultural role models explain Native wisdom in alternative ways, helping reader and protagonist understand that Native wisdom is real and accurate.

Crucially, in the novel's second half, *Solar Storms* expands Angel's story to encompass a larger tribal effort to fight institutionalised colonial violence, in this case the destruction of indigenous land and life caused by government dams. Paralleling the actual dispute in James Bay, Canada, the novel turns in the direction of historical fiction. By doing so, the novel not only exemplifies how individuals like Angel can heal from colonial trauma,

but it also teaches us the kind of collective action that can be taken by large communities in order to counter more contemporary colonial violence. In these ways, *Solar Storms* offers itself as a path towards countering past and present colonial violence, for individuals and groups alike.

Unlike *Ceremony*, a novel set in the specific community of the Laguna Pueblo people, Linda Hogan sets her novel *Solar Storms* in the fictional world centred around Adam's Rib and the Fat-Eaters. But her fictional landscape is recognizable, and the second half of the novel is very similar to the struggle faced by Cree and Inuit people during the James Bay dam constructions of the 1970s. Her combination of fiction and history, and the novel's move into political activism, do offer a way of knowing the world of *Solar Storms*—suggesting that fiction can convey real experiences.

At the core of the novel is a large family, consisting of Wing- and Iron-women. The Iron-women are Dora-Rouge and Agnes. Agnes is Angel's great-grandmother, and Dora-Rouge is Agnes' mother. The Iron-women are victims of trauma, but they are not broken like the Wing women, and they have a Native epistemology, an epistemology that Angel must learn to negotiate and enter.

The Wing women are Loretta, Hannah, and the novel's main narrator, Angel. Loretta is the mother of Hannah and grandmother of Angel, and she suffered severe abuse and cruelties at the hands of the Europeans. When Loretta was a child, her tribe "*became so hungry they ate the [cyanide] poisoned carcasses of deer that the settlers left out for the wolves*" (38<sup>8</sup>). While most of her people died, Loretta was "*taken and used by [European] men who fed her and beat her and forced her*" (39). This turned Loretta into "*one who hurt others*" (39). She abused her daughter, Hannah, and also passed on to her the smell of cyanide.

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<sup>8</sup> All references in this chapter, unless specified otherwise, are to Hogan's novel *Solar Storms*.

Bush and Agnes try to scrub the smell off Hannah, but no matter how they “*scrubbed, the smell never came off that poor girl*” because it is a smell that is “*deeper than skin...blood-deep...history-deep*” (40). By turning the smell into a physical marker for internal wounds, Hogan charts how Hannah’s wounds originate with European atrocities to land and people. This is Angel’s inheritance, and precisely the legacy of violence and harm that the novel will attempt to undo.

Bush loves and cares for Hannah. But Hannah does terrible things to the people at Adam’s Rib. She molests a child, she places needles in the mouth of Bush’s dog, and she even cuts off one of his feet. Bush realises that she has to send Hannah away because she is too dangerous. After some time, Hannah returns to Bush, this time pregnant with Angel. Bush understands that this child needs her protection, and she tries to protect Angel from her mother. Despite Bush’s vigorous efforts, Hannah attacked her daughter—the scar on Angel’s face the visible reminder of this abuse—prompting her to be removed by the county and sent to foster families. This series of violations and losses is not clear at the novel’s opening but provides important patterns that structure the narrative arc of the novel.

Angel Wing is the main narrator in *Solar Storms*, and she suffers from historical trauma similarly to Tayo in *Ceremony*. To set up her trauma, the novel opens with a prologue narrated in italics by Agnes Iron. Multiple voices and lack of clear chronology make Hogan’s opening stylistically similar to Silko’s *Ceremony*.

The prologue is a flashback to events that took place twelve years earlier, when Angel was five and removed from Bush’s custody. It is narrated by Agnes Iron, and it sets up the novel’s indigenous conceptualisation of trauma. Whereas Silko uses imageries of knots and entanglement to represent Tayo’s sickness, Hogan offers an entirely different kind of imagery. She draws on the Inuit concept of ice spirits and frozen hearths to offer a different indigenous

understanding of how trauma works. Both novels offer an understanding of trauma through the lens of a Native epistemology.

We are drawn into the imagery of ice spirits early in the prologue: Agnes narrates a dream she once had about Hannah: in this dream, Hannah is “beneath ice in the center of a lake”, pulling Agnes towards her like “the iron underground that pulls the needle of a compass to the false north” (12). While she is being pulled towards “the terrible and magnetic center” that is Hannah, she thinks of “old stories...[she had] heard from some of the Cree... stories about the frozen heart of evil that was hunger, envy, and greed, how it had tricked people into death or illness and made them go insane” (12).

Unlike *Ceremony*, a novel that slowly unfolds to us the full meaning of its imagery of knots and entanglement, *Solar Storms* draws us directly into the Inuit concept of frozen hearts and ice spirits. We learn early to understand Loretta and Hannah Wing as possessed by evil ice spirits who have turned their hearts into ice. Ice spirits come to people who are “wounded”, people who have suffered a traumatic experience. And the larger the wounds, the greater chance that the spirits will be able to take hold of a person. People who become possessed by such spirits are people who “break”, they are unable to love themselves or others, and they begin to hurt others, often perpetuating their own experiences onto them.

But, at this early stage of the novel, Agnes offers hope, filling us in on the family legacy and setting up the possibility for healing:

*The frozen heart of evil that was hunger, envy, and greed...tricked people into death and 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.*

*Bush, the wife of your grandpa, had struggled with your mother's cold world. She tried to keep you with her, to protect you from the violence that was your mother...Bush turned as desperate as a caged animal. She fought for you.*

*In that battle with human evil, Bush didn't win, but she didn't lose either. It was a tie, a fragile balance that could tip at any time. (13)*

Unlike Hannah, who is so wounded that “there...[is] no thawing for her heart,” there is still hope for the main protagonist, Angel: she can heal and become well, or she can break and turn violent like her mother. Agnes' story sets up the rest of the novel: *Solar Storms* takes us on a journey of reconnection that teaches us how and why Angel is able to tip the fragile balance in her favour and break the pattern of historical trauma. The novel slowly unfolds its antidote to us: Angel's renewed relationships, her return to traditional ways of thinking and being, and her overall re-indigenisation.

Additionally, this prologue ends by exemplifying the power that traditional practices have to restore well-being: Bush has her ceremony to grieve and recover from the loss of Angel. The novel shows us the power of such ceremonies when it is over and people walk away from Bush's house and Bush's sorrow “*walk[s] away with them*” (18). After this, her sorrow becomes “*small*” and “*child-sized*”, because “*all hav[e] it, after that*” (18). The ceremony makes the loss of Angel communal, exemplifying the power of collective sharing of pain.

*Solar Storms* offers a symbiosis between form and content as a way to re-indigenise on a structural level. One of the ways it does so is by incorporating italicised narration offered by other women into the first-person narrative of the main character Angel. These italicised narrations have several functions: Angel is the primary narrator and main character in *Solar Storms*, but with italics Hogan also injects the first-person voices of other women into Angel's narration. The way in which the voices of other women are set into Angel's narration,

addressing Angel directly as “you,” suggests that these women are speaking directly into Angel’s head. In this way, Hogan charts the growing connections between multiple generations of Native women. Apart from the prologue, when Angel first arrives at Adam’s Rib, she is isolated and there are no voices. As her connection with the other women grows, so does the frequency and number of women’s voices increase. Bush, Agnes, and Dora-Rouge each speak in italics within Angel’s own first-person account, and this emphasises the tight bond between these women.

The italicised narrations have other functions as well. When Hogan connects individual experiences in this novel to the larger, collective experiences of Native Americans that have occurred throughout history, it is often done through the stylistic use of italics. Agnes narrates Bush’s experience of losing Angel to the government and her grieving ceremony. The people at Bush’s ceremony grieve “*not only for...[Angel], but for all the children lost...taken away*” (17). In this way, Agnes is the narrator who connects the loss of Angel and the grieving at Bush’s ceremony to the collective experience of U.S. government policies of child-removal.

Bush narrates the event when Hannah rises up out of the water, and she narrates how her body is a garment of scars, “*the place where...time and history and genocide gather*” (101). In this way, Bush connects Hannah’s experiences to larger, collective experiences that Hannah is a part of. Dora-Rouge narrates her sister’s and her own boarding school trauma, connecting them to larger collective traumas. Angel narrates several of the other occasions when an individual’s experience is linked to the collective experiences of Native Americans, such as Eron’s experiences at the boarding school. Having multiple narrators narrating multiple destinies who are all in turn connected to the larger, historical experiences of Native Americans is a literary tool Hogan uses to emphasise how individual experiences are connected with each other and the larger collective experiences of Native Americans. In these

ways, even though the italicised narratives are short, a few pages at most, they are a central part of the historical and psychological scope of *Solar Storms*.

Since the italicised narratives focus on the past, it is through them that much of the historical legacy of the Wing women unfolds into the novel's present. Bush and others reveal Angel's story very slowly to us. We do not get it from Angel until late in the novel when she is healed enough to add to the story herself in her own words. Through Agnes' account, we learn about Loretta, and how she is broken because of the abuse and cruelties she experienced at the hands of European settlers:

*She was from the Elk Islanders, the people who became so hungry that they ate the poisoned carcasses of deer that the settlers left out for the wolves... The cure on that poor girl's life came from watching the desperate people of her tribe die... How she's lived, I didn't know. But after that, when she was still a girl, she'd been taken and used by men who fed her and beat her and forced her. That was how one day she came to be one who hurt others. It was passed down. I could almost hear their voices when she talked, babbling behind hers, men's voices speaking English. (38-39)*

Through another italicised narration, Bush adds to Agnes' account of Hannah:

*She walked out of the dark, cold water. Agnes saw her first. She said, 'My God, it's Harold's daughter'... 'she even has that smell,' Agnes said. It looked like she was born of the storm Agnes said there's one place she comes from for sure, the body of Loretta, because she had that smell of bitter almonds and apple seeds... and she had the same red hair and dark skin. She couldn't have survived the storm of her own. Or maybe, Agnes said, there'd been some other kind of help. A spirit or something. She was a body under siege, a battleground. But she herself never emerged. The others, with*

*their many voices and ways, were larger than she was. She was no longer there...But when I saw her in small, bare nakedness, I stopped and stared. Beneath all the layers of clothes, her skin was a garment of scars. There were burns and incisions...And farther in, I knew, there were violations and invasions of other kinds. What, I could only guess. (97-99)*

Importantly, when Bush, Dora-Rouge and Agnes narrate, they all emphasise that the legacy of the Wing women did not start with Loretta, that she is not "the original sin" (41). They understand that the Wing women were *made* that way by European men. Hogan refuses to let us blame Loretta for acting out the Wing legacy, but instead insists that the Wing women are symptomatic of much larger problems.

The novel's first half centres around teaching us the kind of actions individuals can take to overcome a harmful colonial legacy. It teaches us this through Angel's return to Adam's Rib, twelve years after Bush's mourning ceremony, when Angel is seventeen. For Angel, this return becomes the end of one way of living in the world, and the beginning of another. While on the ferry, she sees Bush in a canoe drifting across the water, and this symbolises the kind of actions that Angel must take. She too must reconnect with and drift easily and silently across water. Such interconnectedness with one's surroundings is the opposite of her mother, who was beneath water and pulled things towards her.

Angel sees Agnes as she steps off the ferry to Adam's Rib, and as they walk back to Agnes' house, they walk a road named "Poison" (24). With this very name, the novel remembers and grieves historical atrocities committed against indigenous people:

The French had named it 'Poisson,' after fish, because it once had rained tiny fish onto the earth along this road. They'd fallen from the sky. It was said they'd hatched in a



cloud. But a few years later the road came to be one of the places where the remaining stray wolves and foxes were poisoned to make more room for the European settlers.

(24)

These two names, and the stories that go with them, remind us how Europeans turned a landscape and people from something that was fertile and good, with an abundance of food, into something poisonous and barren, where people starve to death. Recovery from this change—namely European destruction to people and land—represents one of the novel's major themes and the aim of the novel itself.

The novel offers hope for such recovery: Angel sees another road, higher up, above Poison road: it is the “Hundred-Year-Old-Road” (21). She learns that the people here are elders, happy and prosperous and still living the traditional ways. They represent the possibilities of healing, of returning to the traditional ways.

The novel sets up the indigenous epistemology that Angel must learn to negotiate and enter through her relationships with Dora-Rouge and Agnes Iron. These characters are connected to their extended family of people: land, water, animals, spirits, and other elements. Hogan deliberately gives these characters names that indicate this connectedness: like the iron underground at Adam's Rib, so are these women connected with the earth. And like Dora-Rouge's red hair, so has the water at Adam's Rib become red because of the iron underground, as if the colour red symbolises a form of connectedness to the earth. Even her name, Rouge, “red”, emphasises this connection.

The Iron-women move across many different boundaries, and through them Hogan erases the temporal and spatial edges of Western epistemologies. Dora-Rouge has ongoing conversations with her dead husband, Luther. When she communicates with him, she moves between one world and another, and is a messenger between them. The novel emphasises that

Dora-Rouge is a messenger through Angel's narration: she has "an owl beak of a nose...eyebrows...turned up a little at the edges, winglike" (31). And when Angel sees Dora-Rouge sitting around a table, she thinks of her as "sitting there...birdlike" (35). Frequently, there are also flying creatures buzzing around Dora-Rouge, such as "white-winged moths and June bugs" (37). Angel's narration associates Dora-Rouge with birds and birdlike creatures to emphasise that Dora-Rouge is a messenger. In Native epistemologies, birds frequently "serve as messengers from the Creator, or between humans and the spirit world" ("Native American Birds of Myth and Legend"). Dora-Rouge is also a reader of plants, and she talks to water—abilities that erase boundaries found in the Western world and make her a part of an epistemology where all beings are connected.

Like her mother Dora-Rouge, Agnes also converses and travels across boundaries. She has conversations with a bear that is no longer a part of this world, symbolising how she is interconnected with animals and able to talk with them. Traveling back in time shows how she crosses temporal boundaries. Agnes can also travel backwards in time to find "stories and fragments of songs she ha[s] heard when she was younger and...old songs no one else remember[s]" (55). In these ways, the novel sets up and offers ways of thinking and being that Angel must take on, echoing *Ceremony* by giving us characters that offer wisdom and knowledge that can heal the harmful legacy of colonialism.

Importantly, the Iron women are also the victims of trauma. But unlike the Wing women they are happy and prosperous; and being so, they come teach us that it is possible to get well from colonial atrocities. The Iron women have suffered the cruelties of Loretta and Hannah Wing, but they have also had their own traumatic experiences. Dora-Rouge and her sister were abducted and taken to a boarding school when they were children. What Dora-Rouge's sister experienced there was so horrible that she committed suicide. Agnes had to witness Europeans torture and abuse a bear she grew strong bonds with when she was a child, the very bear she still has ongoing conversations with. In these ways, both of the Iron women

have lost kin at the hands of vicious Europeans. Angel's, and our own understanding as readers, of why these women do not break is an essential part of the novel's journey of reconnection. The novel slowly unfolds to us the antidote that has helped these women counter trauma: their inextricable bond with an indigenous epistemology.

Hogan's novel slowly sets up the new wisdom Angel must gain to restore well-being through her observation of Dora-Rouge's and Agnes' way of thinking and being. Their stories are essential in teaching Angel, and us as readers, Native wisdom: they tell stories about the laws of nature, about respect and reverence for land and animals, and about reciprocal bonds between nature and humans. Angel adopts some of this wisdom: seeing Dora-Rouge talk with Luther, she comes to realise that there are many layers in this world, layers of time, space, and other kinds of layers.

Angel develops new ways of thinking and being, perhaps best exemplified by the way Angel breaks the mirror in Bush's house with her hands. Angel has scars on her face that remind her of her mother's violent attack. Breaking the mirror is an action symbolises that Angel begins to distance herself from her scars. She decides to try to forget about them, and the best way to do so is to break the mirror. The broken mirror symbolises another thing as well: Angel has begun to understand that there are many layers in the world, and that she herself has many layers, the scars on her face being only one—a surface with scars and stories of wounding.

The new and growing understanding Angel has of herself and the world is linked to an overall theme of the novel: those with a Westernised mindset are only able to see the first layer of things, whereas those with an indigenous mindset can see many layers, such as spirits in nature. This ability indicates a different form of understanding and interconnectedness. That Angel is gradually able to see more layers in things comes to symbolise her adaptation of

an indigenous mindset, and it allows her to increasingly see beyond and eventually forget about the scars on her face because she begins to search herself more deeply.

Though largely focused on Angel and her relationships, *Solar Storms* offers wisdom through male characters as well. Angel meets John Husk during her stay with Agnes at Adam's Rib. He is a storyteller, and a character who loves science, with great knowledge of it. His knowledge is central to the overall decolonisation and re-indigenisation work the novel does. Husk uses this scientific knowledge to help Angel understand Dora-Rouge's ways of knowing. One time, he uses Einstein to tell a story that helps Angel better understand Dora-Rouge's dreams. Husk says that "maybe visions, dreams, or memories existed because time, as Einstein thought, was not a straight line" (120). Husk explains that this is the reason Dora-Rouge could talk to Luther, and the reason Angel herself could dream of her ancestors. Hearing Husk's story, Angel begins to understand how Dora-Rouge's dreams can be real and accurate. And, with the help of many of Husk's stories, Angel begins "to believe things, like the stories Bush told, things...[she] would not have listened to months before" (105).

The character of John Husk is perhaps better understood by incorporating some ideas Hogan has presented in other works: she has argued that "science is really a belief system, more than an understood knowledge of the world" (Murray). For Native Americans, "all information, scientific, technological, historical, religious, is put into narrative form" (Thomas). She has argued that Native Americans should translate their science "into a terminology that's understandable in the Western world" (Harrison, *interview* 171). Hogan creates the character of Husk in a way that activates this translation: he offers Native wisdom, and he explains it in terms that the Western world can understand—like his story about Einstein. By constructing the character of Husk in this way, *Solar Storms* functions in the way Carter Meland has argued that stories can: they can perform the kind of translation Hogan asserts is necessary by putting "modern sciences into a symbiotic relationship with Native thinking" (38).

One of the decolonisation aims of such translation is to show people, who have internalized the idea that Western belief systems are inherently better than Native American belief systems, that Native knowledge is real and accurate, and sometimes embodies a more healthful understanding of land and people. This kind of translation is needed because, “in the Western intellectual tradition, the act of writing stories has been given hegemony over the act of telling stories” (Howe, *Tribalography* 122). When the character of Husk succeeds at explaining Native ways of knowing in Western terms, he plays an important role in a novel that tries to re-indigenise, in part by showing us how Native stories embody real, accurate, and healthful knowledge.

Husk and Dora-Rouge are characters who can be understood as cultural role models. They live according to Native wisdom and they are in symbiosis with their surroundings. This makes them vigorous, kind, respectful, and happy. By juxtaposing the well-being of these characters against more Westernised characters in need of help and support, the novel tries to teach us how and why indigenous ways of thinking and being lead to well-being.

Character living more Westernised ways are comparatively isolated from their surroundings. They are not connected with nature and animals, and because of this they have a lot of internal anger, they are sad, disrespectful, and in other ways have a miserable life. LaRue functions as a character that exemplifies how Western ways of thinking and being lead to a sad and miserable life: he does not understand how humans are connected to animals, land, and water, and in this way he seems to represent a Western understanding of the world. His way of being, having no reverence and respect for land, water, and animals, has isolated him from nature and the other people at Adam’s Rib. Because of this, he has no luck with women and he fails as a hunter. He has developed self-hatred, and he is desperately seeking the comfort of any woman who wants him—something very different than Husk, a skilful hunter who is desired by many women.

Husk, Agnes, and Dora-Rouge offer Angel wisdom. But another central character is Bush: Angel's move to Bush's island, Fur island, indicates that Angel has in some ways healed, and that she is ready for new challenges and wisdom that will help her on her path to recovery.

Bush is a woman who lives in solitude on Fur island. She does so because she is wounded from her interactions with Loretta and Hannah. Bush functions as a secondary character that also shows us the possibilities of healing by reconnecting with land and people. But in the first half of the novel, she is wounded, and the novel offers no healing for her.

Fur island embodies stories in its landscape, stories that help Angel understand her own story better, in part by reminding her of how her mother, grandmother, and her larger tribe and people were the victims of European atrocities to land and people. This activates for us as readers the kind of remembering and grieving Brave Heart and DeBruyn argue is necessary. The walls of Bush's house are "made of dark grey stones" that once "had been ballast carried by early ships, discarded once the ships were weighted down with the skins and forests they took from the island" (68, 69). The floor of Bush's house adds to this, telling us not only about the suffering of land and animals, but also about the suffering humans experienced. The floor is made from timbers and decks from a ship that unloaded ballast, but eventually sank during a storm, leaving "the bodies of men...preserved in water, while only the wood of the boat washed to land" (69). Not only is Bush's house made of ballast stones, but there is a massive amount of them all over the island. This adds yet another layer to the story: the scale of past destruction and the massive amount of animals killed. This adds to the processes of remembering and grieving past atrocities.

Unlike the Europeans who destroy, Bush is someone who heals and puts things back together. The way in which Bush has used the stones and timber to create something healthful and good, her own house, symbolises her power to restore and heal. Additionally, Bush is at work reconstructing the skeleton of a large turtle. Angel observes how it slowly comes together through Bush's unwavering, detailed attention. Witnessing this slow restoration and

Bush's determination, Angel comes to realise that she too might one day get whole again just like the turtle. Bush tells Angel that she is putting together the turtle in order to respect it. Her work is thus a reminder about reverence and respect for nature and animals.

Bush tells Angel many stories while Angel is on Fur island, and, combined with Angel's experiences on the island, they add to her growing understanding of her place in the larger story of Wing women. Bush tells Angel that her mother Hannah was "a skin that others wore" (77). This makes Angel think of all the animals on the island that were skinned and made into pelts worn by humans, and she realises that just as the beavers were violently and ruthlessly killed by the Europeans for their pelts, so was Hannah's body and skin violently used and exploited by European men. Bush also relates how Hannah is like the wind. Angel thinks about the strong, freezing wind on Fur island, and this adds to her understanding of how her mother is: just as the winter wind on the island is fierce and violent, so is her mother.

The novel suggests that Bush's stories are powerful through the way Angel realises that "Bush's spare words...[are] creation itself" (94). Until now, Angel has tried to forget her childhood, a story of abuse and neglect, and replace it with a fictional story in which everything is perfect. But Bush's stories give her "a language, a story, to shape...[herself] by," one that is real and accurate and involves love and interconnectedness (94). Love and interconnectedness are offered through Bush's stories because she teaches Angel about the love she experienced from Bush and Agnes before the county took her away. But Bush's stories also offer love and interconnectedness in a different way: just as Dora-Rouge has taught Angel that the world is a "dense soup of love and creation", so do Bush's stories remind Angel about the interconnectedness between all beings (81). And as Angel shapes identity according to Bush's stories, so do the stories themselves shift Angel from isolation toward interconnectedness with people, land, water, spirits, and other elements. When Bush's stories take hold and grow inside Angel, so does Angel begin to replace her made-up childhood story with a new story created by Bush's words. That Bush's stories are healing for

Angel is evident by the way in which Angel begins to feel that she is no longer “alone” and “empty space”, but that “there...[are] others” (94).

That Bush’s stories are powerful and transformative manifests in Angel’s slowly unfolding ability to see through water. With Bush’s stories, Angel begins to understand how everything is alive—fish, water, land, and more—and she develops new sight. Angel’s ability to see through water becomes a sign of how she gradually adopts a Native way of being in the world. And, as Angel comes to see through water, she also forgets about her scars. Just as she sees beneath the surface of water, so does she come to see herself beneath the surface of her scarred face. When asked about them, she answers “what scars?” as if they were no longer on her mind (125). This is a very different moment than when she breaks the mirror at Agnes’ house, and it shows us Angel is developing a positive sense of self as she re-indigenises and shapes her identity.

Bush’s, Agnes’, Dora-Rouge’s, and Angel’s decision to travel north to the Fat-Eaters marks the end of the first half of the novel. Their motivation hints at the novel’s shift to a collective focus. Bush initiates this journey because she wants to go north to prevent the construction of dams that will destroy water and land and displace people. Dora-Rouge wants to reconnect with her people at the Fat-Eaters’ before she dies. Angel travels to find her mother—but also because she wants to meet and reconnect with her own people, the Fat-Eaters. This journey reconfigures our understanding of these characters.

At their going away party people watch the news, which covers “the goings on in Wounded Knee” (156). Wounded Knee references occur frequently the novel. It is how peoples’ age is measured, as when the elder people along the Hundred-Year-Old road are so old that “they had been alive at the time of the massacre of Indians at Wounded Knee” (29). Moreover, every time one of our characters picks up a newspaper, listens to the radio, or watches television, they are curious about what is going on at Wounded Knee. As such,



Hogan forms an intricate link between the 1890 massacre, the 1973 protest, and the individual historical traumas that permeate the novel.

In a similar way, the Trail of Tears is a recurring reference throughout the novel. Hannah, Angel, and Bush are all victims of historical trauma and they are connected to the Trail of Tears through their place of residence or origin. Bush was originally “a Chickasaw from Oklahoma” (28). Harold brought Hannah “*home from Oklahoma*” (38), and Hannah subsequently drifts off to “*Oklahoma*” (104). Angel has lived in “three Oklahoma counties” (73). Hogan thus connects these characters via the brutal, forceful removal of the Cherokee, Muscogee, Seminole, Chickasaw, and Choctaw nations from their homelands to the geographical territory that today is the U.S. state of Oklahoma.

Such connections make the novel able to collectively remember and grieve historical atrocities, something Brave Heart and DeBruyn have argued can mend the effects of the colonial legacy. But Hogan does not only *remember* these events in *Solar Storms*, she also uses these events to emphasise that legacies like that of the Wing family must be seen in the larger, historical context of European atrocities. Hogan asserts that “*some of...[Hannah’s] ancestors walked out of death, out of a massacre. Some of them came from the long trail of dying, people sent from their world, and she was also the child of those starving and poisoned people on Elk Island*” (101). With these words, Hogan places the fictitious Wing women in the larger, overall context of genocidal events against Native Americans, and she suggests that these events continue to shape and mould the present and future in intricate ways.

The novel challenges us to think of land and water—to chart the world around us—in new ways through a focus on maps as the characters travel north. In order to plan their journey north, Bush studies several Western maps, and she becomes obsessed with them. Angel begins to question Bush’s obsession, realising that “none of the maps...[are] the same; they...[are] only as accurate as the minds of their makers and those had been men possessed

with the spoils of this land” (122). She sees that Bush’s maps represent a particular relationship with the land they chart, a relationship of “spoils” rather than of interconnectedness. These maps are unable to show that the land is like an organism that is alive and breathing, and connected to human life.

This realisation comes slower to Bush, who uncharacteristically continues to cling to the maps, bringing an old colonial map to Dora-Rouge. Dora-Rouge reminds Bush that Western maps mask the true face of the earth. But Bush does not understand what Dora-Rouge means, and because she is anxious about their journey and determined to locate their precise route, her obsession with Western maps continues. This is perhaps best exemplified at their going away party, where she “push[es] dishes and cups aside,” puts the map on the table, but gets only “few of...[her] questions...[vaguely] answered” (155). The way Bush looks to the map for surety and confidence suggests that she has in some ways adopted a Western way of thinking about knowledge and maps.

We come to understand Bush’s overreliance on the maps through Angel’s suspicion of them as well as through her growing connectedness with nature. It is as if Angel’s new powers of sight, like the ability to see through water, help her see through the mask of Western maps to see what is really beneath. Western maps are like the scars on her face, they are masks imposed onto people and land by European settlers. Angel’s understanding of maps signals her development and distinguishes her from Bush who does not yet share this understanding. Bush and Angel notably switch positions here, and for the first time Angel has Native wisdom that Bush does not.

Thematically, maps reflect arrogant attitudes about human agency, and dwindling human relationships to land and nature. Even if the fur-traders, missionaries, and other settlers did massive damage to people, animals, trees, and nature, the dam-builders are even worse because they seek to reconfigure land and water that they do not understand. The colonial map from the end of the seventeenth century has “arrows record[ing] the directions of the

currents", but the maps made by corporate dam-builders show only "the flat, two-dimensional world of paper" (131, 279). They have "no understanding" of the land; they do not show the currents of water (343). Resource exploitation is hampered by this very lack: a major problem with the dam is that "the men building...didn't even know that the water ran north" (275). Hogan seems to indicate that Western maps have become increasingly inaccurate, the newer maps showing fewer layers than the older, and this symbolises that Western attitudes towards nature have worsened.

Dora-Rouge's understanding of water is the opposite: she uses the currents of water to her own benefit as the women are travelling north. Through Dora-Rouge's connection with the water, and by juxtaposing her indigenous knowledge and understanding with that of the dam-builders, the novel powerfully exemplifies that Native knowledge arises from an interconnectedness with nature that is real and accurate—and more healthful to land and people.

Symbolically, the novel charts Angel's growing connection with nature through the destruction of a Western map. A map that Bush has brought along begins to gradually fall apart as they travel, until finally "the creases split, the map come[s] apart, and parts of it fall from...[Bush's] hands" (173). This gradual destruction of the map represents a return to a state of being in which they are no longer reliant on Western knowledge of water and land. Angel in fact feels as if they "were undoing the route of explorers, taking apart the advance of commerce" (176). Hogan suggests that by returning to traditional ways of living and being, by replacing Western knowledge—maps—with Native knowledge, these women create a path that undoes the harmful legacy of colonialism.

Even as Bush's map is broken into many pieces, she keeps clinging to it. Angel wonders why:

I never understood why she place[s] so much faith in paper when she trust[s] nothing else about the world that had created those maps...[Bush] want[s] to know where she i[s] at any given time, as if not knowing would change everything, would say there was such a thing as being lost. (173)

But Angel does not feel lost like Bush. In fact, she realises the meaning of what Dora-Rouge has said to them, that they are “already lost” (160). Dora-Rouge means “lost” in a different way, as a kind of harmonious union, and so being “already lost” in wilderness shows your connection to it. Angel realises that there is no such “thing as being lost,” because she cannot be lost in something she is connected with (173). Only those *not* connected get lost and need artificial and deceptive constructions such as Western maps.

To chart Angel’s ever-growing connection with nature and to exemplify how indigenous wisdom works in many ways, Angel gains a new ‘sight’ during their journey north: just like her great-great-great-grandmother Ek, the mother of Dora-Rouge, she can dream plants. Hogan inserts a drawing of a plant into the prose right after Angel dreams a plant for the second time, and another one shortly after. These hand-drawn nature maps come to replace Bush’s maps, and this part of the novel visually reorients us away from colonial knowledge to Angel’s. With this new ability to dream maps, the character of Angel replaces the character of Bush—who uncharacteristically clings to colonial maps—as the font of knowledge.

When Angel arrives at Tulik’s house and sees Ek’s book, Hogan inserts a third and final plant-map to emphasize the strength of this tradition. Ek’s book situates Angel in a long line of plant dreamers—a very different genealogy than the violence of Loretta and Hanna—and the maps added into the pages of Hogan’s novel symbolise Angel’s reconnection with nature and her tribe and people.

Alongside Angel's ability to dream plants a shift in narration occurs to indicate and show her new way of thinking about the world. When Angel arrived at Adam's Rib and was isolated from nature, she felt threatened by wild animals—just like the Europeans. Her fright is evident in her narration of the sound the wolves make: at first she feels as if the wolves are howling and “crying” as if they were dangerous (80). But as Angel begins to dream plant-maps so does her narration of the wolves change: she realises that wolves are not howling but “singing”, as if to share their stories with Angel and other humans (174). This shows that Angel has grown connected to land, water, animals, and she no longer feels threatened by the wolves like when she was isolated and alone. Juxtaposing two very different ways of thinking and being in the world, the novel shows how Native wisdom and understanding can be more healthful and wise in many aspects of life.

Through Bush's obsession, Hogan highlights the ideological force of colonial maps. But Hogan also counteracts these maps, juxtaposing them with the dream-maps of Dora-Rouge, Angel, and other characters. As dream-maps come to replace colonial and corporate ones, so too does Native knowledge take on centrality in the novel. Unlike Bush's Western maps, dream-maps are real, accurate, and reflect intimate connections between humans, nature, spirits, and land. Maps symbolise ways of thinking about and being in the world: wisdom gained through interconnection, such as dream-maps, provides a healthful alternative to Western wisdom and relationships of exploitation and spoils.

In the middle of the novel, just as Angel comes to dream plant-maps, Dora-Rouge tells Angel a story about a time she was walking home from a boarding-school after hearing about her sister's death. With her story, the novel offers an understanding of how and why Dora-Rouge is not broken like the Wing women: it suggests that love and interconnectedness can counter the ice spirits that make people break and turn violent like Hannah and Loretta. Dora-Rouge walks home from the boarding-school, and she sleeps “in a cave of ice” (167). Before she

falls asleep, Dora-Rouge thinks about stories of evil “winter spirits that prey on the souls of young girls” (167). But just as Dora-Rouge thinks about these winter spirits, other images come to her mind:

*I saw my mother stirring a kettle. She looked so beautiful. We were always happy. We had such love...I saw my father walk right out of winter with frozen meat the way he always did, a lynx on his back...I dreamed of my brother. He used to swing me up in his arms. ‘Ena,’ he would say, ‘I hope you grow up so ugly, so no man will want you. Then you have to stay here with us. We get to keep you.’ (167-168)*

Dora-Rouge’s visions and dreams of love and interconnectedness the very night she is laying in a cave of ice, fearful of winter spirits, is the novel’s way of offering a cure and antidote to ice spirits and trauma—a way of thawing frozen hearts. The love and interconnectedness that Dora-Rouge feels is closely linked to her epistemology, in part because she sees “the world...[as] a dense soup of love, creation all around us, full and intelligent”—an understanding of the world offered by an epistemology where everything is alive and interconnected with everything (81). Angel gradually adopts this kind of thinking and being as she re-indigenises her mind, and this helps her heal—in part because her new epistemology helps her replace feelings of isolation and neglect with love and interconnectedness.

The significance of Dora-Rouge’s story is emphasised towards the end of the novel, by another story Dora-Rouge tells Angel:

*‘It happened once before, not so long ago,’...’Just before this skin of time, that there was a woman in the grip of ice. It held her in its blue fingers. It froze her heart’...the woman and ice, just as in old stories, become lovers. (247-248)*

The woman in Dora-Rouge's story turns violent like Hannah and Loretta, and, importantly, she has no dreams about love and interconnectedness. This story strengthens and emphasises the importance of Dora-Rouge's earlier story, in which she is able to counter the forces of ice spirits by the love and interconnectedness she has felt.

Furthermore, the story is set in 1936, so it could be read as a story about Loretta's childhood—but Dora-Rouge omits names, and in this way it could be read as both a story about Loretta, but also more generally, a narrative choice allowing us to draw connections between Loretta's life and the suffering experienced by other Native Americans. Such connections may help facilitate the cathartic experiences Brave Heart and DeBruyn argue is necessary.

An important part of *Solar Storms* is the way it facilitates and performs the grieving and remembering that Brave Heart and DeBruyn argue is necessary. The islands Angel encounters on her journey north helps the novel perform this function.

The first island they encounter is "God Island" (169). Angel sees that there are "a few tall, moss-covered stone walls...half-standing at one end of the large island" (169). She then learns that long ago a man from the east in search of riches had gotten lost, and ended up on this island, only to find it already inhabited (169). This story is analogous to the story of the first Europeans who came to America. But it is also different: unlike the Europeans, this man, "instead of continuing his search for the island of red silver, he remained...[and] took several wives, woman who bore taller children, all of them beautiful" (169). By creating this analogy with the European invasion of America, Hogan uses her novel to remember past contact. But she also offers an alternative way of thinking through the action taken by the man on the island, as if to exemplify the possibilities and benefits of changed ways of being.

Bone island is the second island they encounter. It contains a massive amount of bones from horses, pigs, and humans, all taken by "diseases that wiped out tribes of people" (196).

This island reminds us about the many diseases and deaths that accompanied the Western conquest of America.

The women then encounter North House, a place where there are holes in the ground dug by men looking for silver. Angel realises that the men digging the holes are filled with “anxiety”, “fatigue”, and loneliness, because they have no friends and do not trust anyone because too much is at stake (199). She thinks of the men as possessed, as “men with buck fever, men who would think another man, a dog, even a motorcycle, was a deer” (200). She sees that their obsession with silver not only destroys them but also land and water, forests turned into “only piles of gravel” and waters “dredged and ruined” (199).

Angel thinks of a story about Cortés, a man who said that “white men have a disease of the heart, and the only thing that can cure it is gold” (203). She sees that the men on North House have a similar disease. They are obsessed with “precious metals,” with the spoils of the earth (203). Angel thinks of how dangerous and destructive this disease is, and she realises that it has brought the “end of many worlds” (203). The silver-miners on the island are in many ways like the fur traders of the past and the dam-builders of the present: they have a relationship to “spoils” rather than to the natural world. Angel realises that such rapaciousness makes nature something “to conquer, to possess, to win, to swallow” (339). She comes to understand that Native ways of connectedness are better because they do not bring about destruction to land or people alike, unlike the men who suffer from their own lust.

The final place they encounter is the Place of Sleepers, an island “under water” because “below it, not long ago, one of the first dams had been built” (204). Angel learns that the people on this island had refused to live Western ways, they even refused electricity “on principle alone” (204). Instead, these people had chosen “to live by natural cycles,” like the traditional people (204). Even when the water rose, people stayed where they had always lived, leaving their “bones still float[ing]” in the water (204). The island reminds Angel, and us as readers, about a people’s effort to resist colonial control.



In many ways, the people on the Sleepers island are opposite to the silver-miners on North House. While the silver-miners wake up “at the crack of dawn” and have no friends, the people on Sleepers island “slept like bears” and “eat...[and] make love” (202, 204). Angel comes to realise that the people on Sleepers island were “healthier” for choosing to live in tune with nature and traditional ways (204).

Angel’s encounter with these islands is a journey through time, starting with the initial contact and ending with more contemporary dam-construction. These stories teach Angel about the historical and collective context of her tribe and people. They shape and form Angel’s identity, allowing her to understand her own life in the larger context of collective atrocities against Native Americans. This helps her understand Hannah and herself in new, more healthful ways.

By juxtaposing the well-being of indigenous people with the suffering of people living in Western ways, Angel’s encounter with all these islands is a powerful way the novel works towards influencing protagonist and reader alike, reminding us that living in tune and interconnection with nature brings about well-being. Angel’s encounter with these islands and the stories that go with them are an important part of how *Solar Storms* performs the grieving and remembering Brave Heart and DeBruyn have argued is necessary.

The way in which the islands change from embodying stories of the past to stories of the present reflects the narrative structure of *Solar Storms*. The novel is structured into twenty-two chapters. The first ten chapters with Adam's Rib, Fur island, and past atrocities to people and land. Chapter eleven starts the journey for the women from Adam’s Rib towards the Fat-Eaters in the north. In chapter twelve, the women are at the end of their journey and close to the Fat-Eaters’ territory. In this chapter, contemporary atrocities to people and land become central. Starting with North House and Sleepers island, the landscape begins to tell stories not only about past atrocities, such as Fur island does, but also present ones, like Sleepers island.

And, just as the people on Sleepers island resisted colonial control, so will Angel and the other women come to participate in protests against dam construction.

The fight against the hydroelectric industry in the north gives readers and protagonist a larger perspective on the lives and stories of Adam's Rib and Fur island. The activism against the dam projects takes us beyond the immediate kin group of women that are traveling, to the larger movement of social activism, and it situates the individual traumas of the Wing women in a larger collective context. Angel's reconnection with land and people in the north, and her fight against misuse of Native land, allow her to understand her mother's and her own trauma in ever new ways, insight that is a central part of the slowly unfolding journey of reconnection the novel offers. With the activism against dam construction, *Solar Storms* moves into a situation that is parallel to the actual (and successful) fight against dam projects in James Bay, and it shifts towards the genre of historical fiction.

Perhaps the strongest example of how the novel performs collective grieving is through the character of Dora-Rouge. As the damage to land and water grows in severity, so does her grief worsen. Seeing the land around her changed and wounded, Dora-Rouge cries for the loss of rivers and land. At the Place of Sleepers in ruins under water, she becomes "distraught" and "crie[s]" (204). She also sends several people searching for a plant she needs for her potions. However, the plant is nowhere to be found because the land has been changed by the dam. This adds "to Dora-Rouge's heavy grief" (259-260). This grief for the loss of land, water, animals, plants, and other sacred relatives is a powerful way in which Hogan uses *Solar Storms* for collective grieving and remembering.

The character of Agnes grieves in a different kind of way: she becomes completely silent when she sees the ongoing destruction of land. She develops a fever that worsens as they see more and more ruined lands and waters, and Agnes eventually dies. To emphasise that her death is inextricably bound up with grief for the destruction of the land, Angel thinks

to herself that “it was murder of the soul that was taking place there. Murder with no consequences to the killers. If anything, they were rewarded. Dora-Rouge saw it and grieved” (226).

Hogan also uses a stylistic device to emphasise the connection between destruction of land and Agnes’ death, and between people and land more generally. While most of the chapters in *Solar Storms* are several pages long, chapter fourteen is only one page. This chapter describes the pain and suffering of the land. The ensuing chapter, chapter fifteen, describes the pain and suffering of the people. The page describing the suffering of the land is set on the left-hand side, and the page describing the suffering of the people is set on the right-hand side, so the reader sees both pages at the same time. In these ways, Hogan uses Agnes’ death and stylistic choices to emphasise the connection between psychological trauma to people and aggressive ecological trauma to land, and the novel inextricably binds up violence and destruction of land with the suffering of people.

To finalise the transition from an individual to a collective focus, Hannah dies shortly after Angel arrives. Yet, the meeting between Angel and Hannah is a climatic point in the novel: it is the first time Angel and the reader confront the character of Hannah in person. Angel confronts her mother briefly just after they arrive at the Fat-Eaters, and another time shortly after, at Hannah’s deathbed. She looks at Hannah’s body and she sees scars and burns on it. She realises that her mother’s body is a map of genocide, trauma, and violence. Her realisation works in symbiosis with the italicised narratives to remind us that Hannah’s and Angel’s story must be seen in a larger collective context.

Significantly, in their final act, the torturers—the colonizers—write another signature on Hannah’s body, this time using ink. While she is wrapped in sheets of newspaper, some of the words stick to her body: “Dam Construction Begins at St. Bleu Falls” (304). Adding this text to her body becomes a way in which Hogan symbolically connects the destructive dam-

constructions to previous violence, symbolically inserting it into the house of history and genocide that is Hannah.

The stories on Hannah's body expands Angel's understanding of her mother's story and her own. Angel sees them and realises that she was scarred because Hannah was the victim of such scars and incisions herself. However, in this climactic moment of encounter between Hannah and Angel, Angel's body becomes a different story. Powerfully, at the moment of Hannah's death, Angel comes to realise that even if Hannah had tried to "kill" and "swallow" her, "her [mother's] desperation and loneliness was...[her own] beginning" (251).

Hannah's death marks the end of the Wing-legacy. Although Hannah did horrendous things to Angel, scarring her for life, Angel now understands that she "ha[s] survived in the best of ways" because she is "filled with grief and compassion"—so different from her mother with no sympathy or compassion (251). Angel's "grief and compassion" remind us of Dora-Rouge's story of surviving an ice cave because of love and compassion. These important sections of the novel allow us to understand how a sense of interconnectedness can counter abuse and violence by offering love as a cure.

The novel offers an important part of its embodied knowledge through the bodies of the Wing women: their scarred bodies tell stories of multigenerational trauma and genocide. And when Angel decides to break from this she takes an important step towards becoming a cultural role model that exemplifies the possibilities of change. The fact that Angel decides to break with the Wing legacy is most evident when Angel finds a baby in a basket next to Hannah: it is her little sister, Aurora.

Aurora is the novel's potent symbol for new life, a new beginning. Standing next to her dead mother, with Aurora affectionately in her arms, Angel realises that she is at the "place where some hundred-year-old history...[is] breaking itself apart and trying to reform" (249). To give her little sister a different kind of upbringing than the one she herself and her mother had, Angel decides to adopt Aurora. Angel comes to think of Aurora as "a new kind

of beginning,” and with this act of compassion by Angel, the novel offers a promise of a new model of motherhood and family (258).

Even as the novel’s second half marks a shift towards a more collective focus, it also continues the development of the main-character Angel. She reconnects and grows in new ways. Her adoption of Aurora is important. So too her activism against federal misuse of Native land and resources. And the way in which Angel becomes an active voice championing Native American presence and interests, like Bush and Dora-Rouge, resembles what Gerald Vizenor terms “survivance” (1), survival through resistance. She turns into an Indian who asserts an active presence in contemporary society and stands up against colonial intrusions and impositions. This development in the character of Angel shows how the novel offers growth, healing, and reconnection.

Native stories increasingly inspire Angel, and when she is protesting the dam-construction, she draws inspiration and wisdom from them. The wisdom Angel gains from these stories helps the protesters, exemplifying to us the power and wisdom stories embody. When the food among the protesters is running low, Angel thinks of a story about Wolverine: he “is a thief...that knows what men need and...takes it” (95). Inspired by this story, she sneaks into the dam-builders’ camp, takes their food, and she brings it back to the protesters, thinking to herself that she has acted just like “Wolverine would have done” (323).

Angel in fact finds indigenous stories so inspirational that she comes to think of them as her “teachers”—that her “lessons come[] from...stories” (323). In this way, indigenous stories and their embodied wisdom are essential to the development of Angel’s character. They have helped her *create* a story to live by and they make her *do* things. This reflects the belief that the novel embodies as a whole: that stories are powerful tools of creation and change.

The indigenous name that Angel adopts when she is with the protesters symbolises her reconnection with her tribe and people. When Angel first arrives at Adam's Rib, she thinks of herself as Angel Wing. But she is wounded and isolated like her mother and grandmother, and sees herself as worthless and ugly, as if under the spell of the Wing legacy. As she journeys with the other women from Adam's Rib, she comes to think of herself as "Angel Iron," representing healing and her connectedness to Bush, Dora-Rouge, and Agnes (217). And when Angel is participating in activism against dam-construction with her people she adopts a Native name, "Maniki" (296). This name represents her connectedness not only with the other women, but with her tribe and people, and land, water, spirits, and other elements. With this new name, Angel symbolically rejects the Wing legacy and the effects of colonialism and Western ways.

Reconnecting with land and people offers healing to other characters as well, among them Dora-Rouge. Having returned to her birthplace, Dora-Rouge is "happier" than before (299). And with her new relationship with Tulik, her relationship with Luther is "finally put to rest", so that she no longer gets "the faraway look on her face" (299, 298). Like Angel, Dora-Rouge rids herself of her European name, and takes back her Native name "Ena" (299). For these characters, Native names symbolise healing and reconnection with people and land.

Dora-Rouge's healing shows that even as it is through Angel that we primarily see the possibilities of healing and restoration of well-being from Native ways of thinking and being, Dora-Rouge and other characters also exemplifies such potential. Bush opens "like the lilies" when she reconnects with land and water, and her activism against dam-construction changes her from being an isolated woman on Fur island to someone deeply connected with other people (176). This is perhaps most strongly exemplified by the way she develops a strong, romantic relationship with one of the other protesters. Bush's change is permanent, and when she returns to Adam's Rib, Angel thinks of how they had "left everything behind...at the Fat-Eaters" (335). Symbolically, Bush says to Angel, "it's terribly lonely here, don't you think?"

(336). This emphasises how Bush has healed and reconnected with people. Bush and Dora-Rouge may be secondary characters. But their healing and reconnection with land and people echo Angel's own re-indigenisation, furthering one of the novel's central themes.

Tulik's tender compassion makes him an important male character in *Solar Storms*. He is happy, tender and compassionate, and also masculine and respectable. Just like Dora-Rouge, he follows a Native way of being in the world. During a meeting with the people building the dams, Tulik is initially the person the dam-builders address because he is a man and an elder. During the meeting, Aurora starts to cry and Tulik lifts her affectionately into his arms. But this action makes him loose "points in the white men's book", because "tenderness...[is] not a quality of strength to them. It...[is] unmanly, an act they...[consider] soft and unworthy...[and] from that moment on they...[do] not consider Tulik to be a leader of his people" (281, 281-282). Hogan in this way juxtaposes a Native understanding of masculinity, one that embraces tenderness as a manly, fatherly quality, against a Western understanding of masculinity that sees tenderness among men as soft and unworthy, represented by ruthless, "unethical" dam-builders that want to destroy land and water (279). Just as Angel comes to understand, so do we as readers understand that a masculinity embracing tenderness is better than one that does not, because such a masculinity creates vigorous, kind, and compassionate people. By influencing thinking in this way, the novel attempts to decolonise and re-indigenise Angel's, as well as the reader's perception of masculinity.

Hogan's novel overall exemplifies the power of stories to heal. In the final section, where the novel hews closest to the James Bay fight, the novel also shows how narrative can be used to destroy, and this opens another decolonising potential of the novel: this section teaches us how control over narrative and history can create an incorrect public image of Native Americans, one that bolsters the colonial agenda and works as a tool of oppression.

In order to hamper the dam-construction, Bush is typing furiously to tell the rest of the world about what is going on at the Fat-Eaters. She takes pictures, and she arranges for her stories to be smuggled safely out to newspapers. Even so, few newspapers write about the protests, and the ones who do reverse the truth. *The Great River News* tells stories about how the Indians at Fat-Eaters “occupy” Two-Town Post, as if the Natives had “stolen it and taken it over by force” (302). Angel sees that the false stories in the newspapers cause tension and rifts among the protesters, and she realises that they are like weapons that the dam-builders use to steal their land: Bush’s stories are used by the colonisers to destroy the important fellowship among the protesters.

To emphasise the futility of Bush’s efforts, Hogan stylistically inserts one of Bush’s letters into the middle of the page: even as there are many letters written to and from characters in the novel, only one is set in italics and indented into the middle of the page, and in this way it gains visual prominence. This letter confirms that communication between the protesters and the outside world is being interrupted. The choice to insert the letter into the middle of the page in this way works in symbiosis with the content of the prose to remind the reader of how the dominant society can use media as a way to oppress Native Americans.

That the newspapers reverse stories in ways that are harmful to Native people is emphasised when Angel sees a newspaper-headline: “On the Warpath Again (344). But this newspaper-headline is just as misleading as the newspaper stories earlier in the novel. Even after the dam-construction has been taken to court, the newspapers still cast Tulik and the other Indians as the aggressors, as if *they* rather than the dam-builders were the intruders destroying land and people.

Importantly, *Solar Storms* teaches us that there are ways to counter such institutionalised forms of control, like the use of traditional wisdom and practices. Even if the media only tell lies and the mail is censored, traditional networks between tribes continue to thrive, and the protest grows.



With the activism of Angel, Bush, and the other characters, *Solar Storms* becomes exemplary of the kind of community action that can be taken against systemic representations of colonial power. The novel shows what people can do to safeguard land against corporate interests. People from everywhere come together to participate in protests against the dam-construction. Even if some of the land and water is destroyed, the building of the dam is eventually stopped, showing that this kind of activism might work.

To encourage this kind of collective activism, Angel reminds us at the end of the novel that their collective resistance had “thrown an anchor into the future and followed the rope to the end of it, to where we would dream new dreams, new medicines and one day, once again, remember the sacredness of every living thing” (344).

Aurora turns into the novel’s final symbol of hope, and the evidence of the possibilities of changing circumstances in the society, both on the individual and collective level. Angel will not treat her sister in the same way as she has been treated. Even if Hannah had no love for herself, Angel now has plenty. Just as she is able to love herself, she will love her little sister and break with the Wing legacy.

Even if Angel’s initial problems cannot be solely explained by the notion of a colonized mind, re-indigenizing herself becomes a way in which Angel decolonises her mind, but also how she heals herself of historical trauma. With her newfound indigenous mindset, Angel is able to understand that her grand-mother and mother were made into who they were by European men, and she realises that even if she has lost her own mother, she has other strong and powerful bonds with Bush, Dora-Rouge, Agnes, and her tribe and people, and with water, land, animals, spirits, and other beings. With this knowledge, Angel is no longer isolated and alone, and she is able to break the chain of historical trauma and turn into an Iron woman. Angel becomes a cultural role model that shows the potential people have to heal from trauma and to re-indigenise.

That *everyone* has potential to re-indigenise is perhaps best exemplified by LaRue. Over the course of the novel, even a dealer in “bones and hides and preserved foetuses” is able to change his way of being, so much that even Bush begins “to like that man” (82, 350).

## Conclusion

I have suggested that clinical psychology combined with narrative theory offers a useful perspective by which to understand novels as cultural artefacts with the power to heal and restore well-being among its readers.

I have looked closely at how *Ceremony* and *Solar Storms* offer themselves as literary spaces for cultural role models that in turn can create and influence identity. I have also tried to show how each of these novels can be understood to facilitate the cathartic processes of mourning that Brave Heart and DeBruyn argue is necessary to counteract the effects of historical unresolved grief.

The novels offer elders such as Dora-Rouge, Bush, Husk, Uncle Josiah, Betonie, and Ts'eh, all of which represent Native epistemologies in various forms. Characters such as Emo, Harley, and LaRue have more Westernised ways of being, shown to be individually and communally destructive. These characters are in need of help and support, and are juxtaposed against the well-being of those with indigenous ways of being. Protagonist and reader alike come to understand that indigenous ways of being are more healthful.

For the most part we are limited to a third-person subjective perspective in *Ceremony*, and to a first-person perspective in *Solar Storms*. Such perspectives play an important role in how each novel slowly unfolds to us the return to Native wisdom that leads to well-being. In both novels, this unfolding makes a connection between protagonist and reader, and understanding grows concurrently as they journey together.

*Ceremony* invokes the concept of the witchery in order to add to our understanding of why Emo's Westernised way of being is so destructive. By combining myth and prose, Silko helps us realize that Emo is a victim of a great evil in the world, and his Westernised ideas isolate him from people, land, and other beings. The result is violence, contempt, and neglect—exactly what the witchery wants. The symbiotic relationship between prose and

myth is essential to our understanding of how and why Emo enacts the agenda of the witchery, in part because they mutually contextualize and enrich each other.

Emo is the opposite of Uncle Josiah, Betonie, and Tayo. Just as Silko injects myth-poems into the prose to expand our understanding of the witchery, so do myth-poems—like the ones set on the opening pages of the novel—help us understand the relationship between Uncle Josiah's healthful indigenous ways of being and Spider-Woman's fabric of interconnection: his way of being helps sustain and co-create this delicate web of existence.

Linda Hogan's *Solar Storms* does not use myth in the same way, but it too relies on epistemology to explain why indigenous wisdom brings about healthful ways of being. Like *Ceremony*, it suggests that Native ways of being favour interconnectedness and love that make people well. The dam-builders in *Solar Storms* are comparable to Emo in *Ceremony*: they too are isolated from their surroundings. They do not understand how land and water work, and this brings about harm to Native Americans and Western people alike.

In *Ceremony* and *Solar Storms*, the main characters are able to take on an indigenous way of being in the world, and in the process they regain wellness. This makes them powerful cultural role models: they show the possibilities and benefits of taking on a Native identity and living according to indigenous beliefs. And just as stories help Angel and Tayo return to indigenous wisdom and heal, so do these novels embody the power of story to healing us as readers.

Additionally, the novels warn us that narrative and history can also be used as a form of institutionalized control. Tayo's illness stems in part from the stories he has been taught in Western schools, and they delay his recovery of Uncle Josiah's cattle. Angel too comes to realise that Bush's news stories are being censored in order to create an incorrect public image of Native Americans, one that bolsters the colonial agenda. The novels thus work to recognise, reject, and correct this kind of misrepresentation, and to shape and influence positive, accurate Native identities.

Uncle Josiah, Tulik, and Husk are influential characters in yet another way. They are masculine and respectable, yet tender and compassionate, and through them these novels aim to re-indigenise our understanding of masculinity. *Ceremony* offers a creation myth very different from the narrative of original sin offered by the Western world. With this myth-poem, *Ceremony* tries to counteract the delegation of women to a role of silence in order to influence our understanding of ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’.

Moreover, the character of Husk is created in a way that offers a translation between a Native belief system and a more Westernised belief system. By doing so, *Solar Storms* helps put “modern sciences into a symbiotic relationship with Native thinking”—with the purpose of showing us that Native wisdom is real and accurate, and an important part of a Native identity (Meland 38).

To facilitate cathartic experiences, *Solar Storms* creates inextricable connections between collective, historical genocidal events, and the fictional main characters in the novel. Hogan offers these connections through style and content, including her use of italicized narrations and frequent references to Wounded Knee, the Trails of Tears, and other genocidal events committed against Native Americans. The move towards historical fiction in the novel’s second half strengthens *Solar Storms*’ ability to function as a space for remembering and grieving past as well as present atrocities to close and extended kin. It facilitates cathartic experiences by invoking painful memories, and it invites collective grieving as the characters in the novels themselves grieve—for the losses of close as well as more extended family, land, water, animals, plants, and other beings.

*Ceremony* does not create historical links in the same intricate way as *Solar Storms*, but it too offers itself as a space for remembering and grieving past atrocities, like the U.S. Government’s requisition of Native land for uranium mining.

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