

نحو عدالة بيئية: المقاومة البيئية Ecoresistance في شعر لندا هوقن

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الملخص

الشاعرة لندا هوقن هي شاعرة أمريكية من قبيلة شيكاسا ومن السكان الأصليين، وقد كتبت عدداً من الدواوين الشعرية التي تعبر عن حبها لتاريخ قبيلتها وأرضها، وتقاليدهم الشفهية، وعن البيئة وعالم الطبيعة. على الرغم من ذبوع صيتها في مجال الشعر البيئي، إلا أن المفكرين الذين درسوا شعرها لم يتناولوا رؤيتها البيئية وعلاقتها بتقاليدها القبلية والنظام البيئي، خاصةً ديوانها الشعري "داكن. حلول: قصائد جديدة ومختارة".

تستهدف هذه الدراسة الإجابة على الأسئلة الجوهرية التالية: ما وجهة نظر لندا هوقن البيئية في ديوانها "داكن. حلول: قصائد جديدة ومختارة"؟ وكيف استعرضت مبدأ العدالة البيئية في شعرها؟ وكيف ربطت بين نظرتها البيئية وإرثها الثقافي؟

أظهرت الدراسة رؤية الشاعرة للاختلال المستمر للميزان البيئي؛ بسبب الاستعمار وآثاره المدمرة على الإنسان والنظام البيئي، وذلك من خلال تطبيق منهجية النقد البيئي. كما كشفت عن العادات القبلية للسكان الأصليين في شعر الكاتبة وخاصة السرد القصصي وطرق التداوي التقليدية وقدرتهما على خلق التوازن بين النظام البيئي والروحي في حياة الإنسان.

اعتمدت الدراسة على أسلوب البحث النوعي المبني على تحليل الموضوعات التي تطرقت لها الشاعرة. تظهر نتائج البحث أن الشاعرة استطاعت أن تنقل الرؤية البيئية الخاصة بالسكان الأصليين من خلال استراتيجيات المقاومة البيئية. كما بينت أن الإنسان والنظام البيئي هما ضحايا الاستعمار الأوروبي. لذا، رأت الشاعرة أنه يجب على السكان الأصليين أن ينشدوا العدالة البيئية مع حق تقرير المصير في حال رغبتهم في إنهاء استعمار الإنسان والأرض. توصي الباحثة بدراسة تأثير العرق الأوروبي الأبيض للشاعرة على كتاباتها البيئية نظراً لأنها تنحدر من عرقين مختلفين، أحدهما أوروبي، والآخر من سكان أمريكا الأصليين.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المقاومة البيئية، النقد البيئي، العدالة البيئية، لندا هوقن، الطبيعة، السكان الأصليين.

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Towards an Environmental Justice: Linda Hogan's Ecoresistance

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Abstract

Linda Hogan is a Chickasaw poet who wrote various volumes of poetry that reflect her love for Chickasaw's history, land, and oral traditions. She also wrote about the environment and the natural world. Although she is a well-known environmentalist, scholars have not investigated her environmental vision and its connection to native traditions and the ecosystem, specifically in her collection of poetry *Dark. Sweet: New & Selected Poems* (2014).

This study aims to answer the following questions: What is the environmental perspective of Linda Hogan in her collection of poetry *Dark. Sweet: New & Selected Poems* (2014)? How does she present environmental justice in her poetry? How does she connect her environmental vision to her tribal heritage? The study also deals with Hogan's holistic representation of the human experience in the natural world. Through the application of the ecocritical approach, the study reveals the poet's depiction of past injustices of colonization and its lingering ecological effects on humans and the ecosystem. Additionally, it examines Native American storytelling and traditional healing practices and how they can form the balance between human, ecological and spiritual system.

The study adopted a qualitative method that involves a thematic analysis of the poet's work. The findings show that Hogan communicates her tribal ecological vision through her strategy of ecoresistance. They also reveal that humans and the ecosystem were the discounted casualties of European colonization. For Native Americans, to decolonize themselves and the land, they must strive for environmental justice along with seeking the right for self-determination. The researcher recommends conducting a study that identifies the influence of Hogan's Anglo culture on her environmental poetic writings by considering that she is of mixed-blood heritage.

Keywords: Ecocriticism, ecoresistance, environmental justice, Linda Hogan, nature, Native Americans.

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"We are the dead and the witnesses to death of hundreds of thousands of our people, of the water, the air, the animals and forests and grassy lands that sustained them and us not so very long ago" Paula Gunn Allen (Sacred Hoop 155).

Chickasaw poet Linda Hogan is one of the Native poets who attracted the attention as an environmental activist and a spokesperson for Native people's human rights⁽¹⁾. She also advocates the rights of other life forms on earth. Her poetry reflects her deep concern for nature and her view of wilderness as a haven from modern-day society. She speaks of the spiritual fragmentation that resulted from our alienation from the natural world and the destruction of the ecosystem. She also shows the ways to restore the earth and heal the planet.

Hogan's poetry is influenced by her Chickasaw heritage. It is described as earth-based through which she mirrors Native people's survival and continuity. It deals with her people's struggle to keep their culture alive and most importantly to have a sense of wholeness. Thus, in her poetry, Hogan emphasizes the importance of the interaction between humans and nonhumans since she believes this connection shapes the person's sense of self. Furthermore, Hogan's poetry defies the Western perception of "Others" and the non-human beings as objects of domination and subordination. It highlights the intertwined need to keep Native American legacy and the natural environment alive. Through her focus on ecological injustices, Hogan maps out the way to justice, peace, and wholeness. Her poetry becomes a clear affirmation of the entangled relationship between humans and the natural world.

In her poetry, Hogan highlights the exploitation of land, people, and nonhuman others by the White settlers. She emphasizes the significant need to create a new life of the remnants of Native Americans history and cultural heritage. Her strategy is drawing special attention to the inherent bond between people and their natural surroundings. She employs what I call an ecoresistance strategy by which she revives her tribal culture and employs a Native perspective concerning humans and the ecosystem. By ecoresistance, I mean the belief that human beings must maintain and protect the land against any exploitation and the land will ultimately sustain them back. This belief forms the foundation of Hogan's environmental activism by which she explains that the survival of her people entails the survival of the natural world (Allen, Sacred Hoop 168).

This paper discusses Hogan's environmental portrayal of her tribal land, people, and traditions. It reveals the poet's representation of colonization's past injustices and its lingering ecological effects on humans and the ecosystem. It portrays Hogan's tribal ecological vision as a way of renewal and survival in a world full of many wrong doings against nature. The paper consists of four sections: literature review, the contested terrain, the terrible other, and tribal traditions.

I. Literature Review

This section of the paper reviews the literature which has been written about Hogan's poetry. In fact, the literary articles that have dealt with Linda Hogan's poetry are very scant. We can, nonetheless, divide the literature written on Hogan's poetry into three categories: literature concerning her formal poetic style, articles dealing with her ecofeminist attitudes, and literature that examines her ecocritical poems.

Linda Hogan was born on July 16, 1947, in Denver, Colorado. She is a Native writer who is widely known as a novelist although her writing includes novels, short stories, poetry, plays, memoir, and essays. Most of the literary analysis has been engaging with her fictions, namely, *Mean Spirit* (1990), *Solar Storms* (1994), *Power* (1998), and *People of the Whale* (2008) and her nonfiction such as *Dwellings* (1995), *The Sweet Breathing of Plants* (2001), *The Woman Who Watches Over the World* (2001), and *Face to Face* (2004). Since the focus of this paper is on her poetry, specifically her poetic volume *Dark. Sweet: New & Selected Poems*, the literature review is going to examine merely the writings that have dealt with this genre.

In "Ways in the World": Formal Poetics in Linda Hogan's *Rounding the Human Corners*," Janet McAdams tries to uncover the connections that Hogan's draws between the human and the whole universe. The whole discussion turns out to be a study of the poetic style in *Rounding the Human Corners* in comparison to Hogan's *The Book of Medicines*. McAdams fails to highlight Hogan's ecofeminism though the whole volume centers around her eco-feminist philosophy.

Ahmad Abd Al-salam Ahmad in "Aspects of Ecofeminism in the Poetry of Fadwa Tugan and Linda Hogan" argues that Hogan presents women and nature as treated unfairly by society. Likewise, Sayd Sadek in "Grandmothers Were My Tribal Gods": An Ecofeminist Reading of Linda Hogan's *The Book of Medicine*" explores the connections between the domination of nature and women in Hogan's collection *The Book of Medicines*. Both writers explore the theme of ecofeminism in Hogan's poetry and give special attention to the connectedness between women and nature. Unfortunately, they miss the connection between her writing and her Native American legacy and how she frames it within her role as an environmental activist.

Similarly, Donelle Dreese, Ghada Alakhdar, and Tabarak Ali discuss ecofeminism in the poetry of Hogan. They mainly explore the water symbolism in the poet's work. They examine Hogan's representation of women, animals, and nature. In "The Terrestrial and Aquatic Intelligence of Linda Hogan," Dreese investigates Hogan's terrestrial intelligence and its importance for humans and the environment. Dreese fails to recognize the role of Native American traditions combined with Hogan environmentalism and its unique manifestation in Hogan's poetry.

In “An Ecocritical Reading of Water Symbolism in a Selection of Two Female Native American Poets,” Ghada Alakhdar gives an ecocritical and ecofeminist reading of Harjo’s and Hogan’s selected poems. She highlights Hogan’s connection between the degradation of nature and subordination of women. In the same manner, Tabarak Ali stresses in “Ecofeminism in Selected Poems by Linda Hogan” Hogan’s belief that women and nature should be respected to guarantee the continuity of life. Both Alakhdar and Ali discuss Hogan’s wish to end violence against animals, nature, and women, but they haven’t explained how Hogan connected ecology and resistance.

Benay Blend explores in her article “Linda Hogan’s ‘Geography of the Spirit’: Division and Transcendence in Selected Texts” Hogan’s difficult journey toward self-esteem and self-identity. Blend investigates how Hogan overcomes the condition of her mixed-blood status and how she highly values family ties and unity with nature. Similarly, Ernest Smith discusses Hogan’s connection with nature in his article “‘The Inside of Lies and History’: Linda Hogan’s Poetry of Conscience.” He considers all of Hogan’s poetry as a spiritual journey that involves humans’ mysterious and crucial connection with the earth (121). Blend and Smith fall short of discussing Hogan’s environmental activism and her strategy of resistance.

The above-mentioned literature has neglected Hogan’s call to restore the ecological and environmental balance which was disrupted by White settlers. In her environmental activism Hogan strives for interconnectedness between all human life and the natural world as she represents the holistic experience of the human beings on earth. The spiritual union which Hogan calls for extends beyond women, plants, and animals. In fact, it includes the human / nonhuman, natural / mythical, terrestrial/ ethereal, and flora/ fauna world.

II. The Contested Terrain

N. Scott Momaday⁽²⁾ believes that Native Americans have a very long experience with the land to the point that they became able to define themselves in relation to the land and at the same time acquire a particular sense of the place (Coltelli158). Likewise, Vine Deloria Jr. argues that American Indians regard their lands as having the highest possible meaning, and all their statements are made in relation to this reference point in mind (God, 61). For Hogan, this sense of place revolves around the human’s spiritual connection to the land and the ecosystem in general. When she speaks of the land, she speaks of the need to view the world intact. She stresses the need to “remember the strong currents that pass between humans and the rest of nature, currents that are the felt voice of land, heard in the cells of the body” (Dwellings 84).

In her poetry, Hogan writes about the violence against her Native land and how this violence impacted the life of Native Americans and their biosphere. Through an eternal tribal memory, she documents the very beginning of the colonial destruction of the Native land and communities. She pictures the historical moments when the seeds of colonization were sown. In "Trail of Tears: Our Removal," for example, she describes the bleak fate of the land and writes,

With lines unseen the land was broken.
When surveyors came, we knew
What the prophet had said was true,
This land with unseen lines would be taken. (357)

This terrible event was predicted by the tribe elderly people. They anticipated the loss of their land when the Europeans first arrived. These four lines of the poem show two important facts. First, the Native land is what matters most in the process of colonization. Vine Deloria explains this fact and argues the official white attitude toward Indian lands was that discovery gave the United States absolute right to put an end to the Natives' right to occupy their Native lands either by purchase or conquest (*Custer* 31). Thus, the colonizer views the land as his own and dismissed the Native people's right to it. Indeed, "The growing numbers of colonists regarded the lands they occupied as theirs by right, while the alleged nomadism of the Indians suggested to them that there was no native interest in land ownership" (Huggan and Tiffin 9). Second, the destruction of the land coincided with the arrival of the settlers. The metaphor in "the unseen lines" represents unity in the community before colonization. It highlights the different ways in which the colonizer and the colonized view the land. For the colonizer, the land of the Native people is 'pristine wilderness' and he has the right to its ownership. The colonized people, on the other hand, perceive it as the ancestral land in which they lived in harmony for centuries.

The colonizer's view of the Native land as no man's land explains the logic behind Western imperialism. The colonizer fails to imagine the landscape as being full of life and thriving communities before his arrival. Joni Adamson argues that after indigenous people are removed, government agencies represented the Native land as "pristine wilderness" denying the fact that indigenous nations inhabited the place for many centuries. It denies the fact that Native nations have lived in the place in "sustainable ways" (*American Indian* 16). In fact, Native Americans are often described as living in more environmentally maintainable ways than are contemporary Euro-Americans, nevertheless, they are often oppressed in the name of "pristine" nature (Ray 85).

When Native communities lose their land, they face major threats to their cultures and way of life. Joni Adamson argues that Native American people are dependent on and also shaped by their land. She describes the difficult situation of the Tohono O'odham

after they lost some of their land; such situation holds true for many Native tribes,

Before colonization, the Tohono O'odham were dependent on and shaped by the land they inhabited. They planted corn near the mouths of arroyos to take advantage of summer rains. When necessary, they protected their families from more aggressive tribes making raids on their stores of food. After the coming of Spanish colonial priests and later of U.S. government officials, the threat to their lands and to their quality of life was no longer simply a matter of adverse meteorological conditions or hostile tribes; now the threat was a systematic assault on the entire culture in the form of forced education and imposed reservation borders. (*American Indian* 20)

The colonial aggression against the land coincides with the aggression against the Native cultures. Adamson believes that the struggle that American Indians are facing as a people is cultural whether in the form of forced Anglo-Saxon education or the creation of the boundaries in the forced reservations. Even though Vine Deloria believes that the present problem of Native Americans is legal more than cultural, he agrees with Adamson on the fact that "The white is after Indian lands and resources. He always has been and always will be" (Custer 174). The aftermaths of the European occupation prove the notion that Native American struggle for sovereignty and equality is both legal and cultural. They cannot claim one and dismiss the other.

For Hogan, the political situation of Native people is interrelated to the destruction of nature. The occupation of the Native land is unified with the abuse of natural resources. It deprives the earth of its basic components. She asserts that she witnessed and grew up with these visions of destruction. She feels that what people are doing to the earth from the very beginning of the mining process all the way to the final explosion is that they're taking power out of the earth which essentially belongs to the earth (Sacred Hoop 168-69). She perceives their transgression against the land as if they are "taking the heart and the soul of the earth" (Sacred Hoop 168-69).

The first cultural and ecological transformation, which the colonizer brought was the destruction of trees. Hogan describes how the colonizers moved the trunks of the trees "to the edge of the world, / transformed dark wood /into the sleek handles of rifles" ("Stolen Trees" 12). Here in this stanza, we can see Adamson's definition of colonization sound and clear. For her, it "is the attempt to impose civic law on "Others" of all kinds-desert peoples, animals, and vegetation" (*American Indian* 21). This same European style of conquest and subordination resonates with Adamson's theory about colonization and culture. In their colonial conquest, the Europeans targeted Native people's cultures in order to weaken them and defeat them spiritually. The use of the word "rifles" in the poem reflects this colonial reality. It indicates political, cultural, and

environmental significance. Politically, the word exposes the colonizer's power over the Native people which consequently led to the loss of the land. Culturally, it concerns the European use of violence to achieve their colonial ambition. And at the environment level, the word signifies the abuse and degradation of the forest. Therefore, the conflict between Native people and the settlers is political, cultural, and environmental. In a very similar image, Hogan describes how her homeland of Oklahoma was deforested "where even their trees were stolen by white men looking to sell hardwood for gunstocks" (Woman 118). The unity and wholeness of the Native land is destroyed by the European settlers who incorrectly think that Native people's connection to the land is through ownership and submission rather than peaceful coexistence and mutual interdependence. Paula Gunn Allen describes the place of the land in Native People's lives and how they see the land not just an image, but as actually an integral part of their being as they are of its being ("IYANI" 191). Likewise, Simon Ortiz describes Native people's real relationship to the land and writes "Land and people are interdependent. In fact, they are one and the same essential of Existence. They cannot be separated and delineated into singular entities" ("Introduction" xii).

In Hogan's poetry, the destruction of the ancestral land and nonhuman beings is essentially interdependent. With the European colonization of the land, the extinction of the plants, grass and vegetation becomes one of the ecological issues that Native communities must face. Hogan describes how the loss of the land coincides with the extermination of all the natural resources,

Without a map,
without a country,
the man stole it
and no plants grew.
Nothing rose up,
no sight of faces loved,
everything known by feel and memory
only. ("The Thief of Light" 245)

The poet draws an image in which plants constitute an integral and a living part of the Native land. When the land is lost, every sign of life disappears. The ecosystem is transformed and altered. With the arrival of European colonizers, the local plants are either removed or replaced by new plants from different environment (Huggan and Tiffin 7). The Native culture is replaced by the European one. The cultural and environmental struggles are connected in the Native people's decolonization of the land.

In the above-mentioned stanza, Hogan clearly draws the attention to the Indigenous philosophy of the kinship between human beings and non-human other. In her tribal knowledge, there is no inherited difference between these inhabitants; all have rights

to exist and flourish. In her discussion of the Universal Declaration on the Rights of Mother Earth that was written after a conference on climate change and the rights of Mother Earth in 2010, Adamson contends that the conference participants acknowledge Indigenous peoples ancestral “cosmovisions” which perceive the Earth as a “person” or living being with whom all persons have an inseparable and interdependent relationship (Introduction 4).

Hogan’s image of people and nonhuman others as connected and interwoven is the basis of her ecoresistance strategy by which she sustains her Native culture and keeps the political and ecological struggle alive. As an environmental activist, Hogan cannot dismiss “the connections between the marginalization and impoverishment of human communities and the exploitation and degradation of the environment” (Adamson, American Indian 16). Therefore, to understand the political struggle of Native people, one has to recognize the important place of the Native land and how it shapes people’s life. It is also equally important to know how the land facilitates the ecological struggle and the aspiration for environmental justice. It could also explain why environmental degradation happens to be on Native territories.

III. The Terrible Other

Native Americans’ traditional and thriving life was disrupted drastically with the arrival of the European settlers. Native people had to resist the European aggression and fight for their people and tribal land. In their fight to keep their independence, they witnessed aggression, genocides, new diseases, displacement, and environmental destruction. Recognizing this bleak history, Hogan describes her people as “the terrible other” who suffered and still continue to suffer (“Mountain Lion” 153). Hogan has always called her people ‘landless Indians’ because they lost their land to the settlers. Therefore, any attempt to understand colonization, must start “with the dispossession of colonized peoples of their land” (qtd in Huhndorf 46).

Like their land, Native people bear the scars of destruction and dispossession. The colonial aggression that targeted their environment still resonates in their lives as people and communities. Hogan pictures how the Europeans wars were directed towards human and nonhuman beings in the same magnitude. People, animals, and plants witnessed colonial destruction and devastation. Hogan writes, “you remember the water, even the terror / when our horses had to break through its freezing skin / to swim that dark cold river of memory” (“Artifact: The Mica Hand” 403). As an aesthetic dimension, in these lines Hogan relies heavily on the consonance sound “r” to create the sad, yet proud tone of the poem. The consonance sound appears at the end of the words “remember,” “water,” “terror” while they indicate sadness and gloom. But, in the second line, the consonance sound appears almost in the middle of the words “horses,”

“break,” “through,” “freezing” and they reflect pride and persistence. The combination of the two lines shows the speaker’s paradoxical feelings of sadness and pride. This aesthetic manner of writing characterizes Hogan’s poetic style where her discursive expression reveals the environmental injustice that her land and people faced.

In the quoted lines above, Hogan conveys an interfolding image of water, horses, and humans escaping one enemy and writing one history. The history of European colonization is closely linked to the destruction of the world of fauna and flora. Even though this image of war violence in the above-mentioned poem reflects the immediate violence against people and nature, it is also the beginning of slow violence against people and their environment. Rob Nixon defines this type of violence as “a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all” (2). This documented moment of history mirrors the beginning of the destruction of people and their environment. People were either killed or displaced; nonhuman others were destroyed or replaced. According to Huggan and Tiffin these settlers arrived with crops, flocks, and herds, and cleared land, destroying local ecosystems (7). As a result, settler ecologies must be written so that settlers can utilize their own governance systems (Whyte et al. 158). This colonial transformation of Native system reaffirms the relationship between the colonization of people and the destruction of nature. DeLoughrey and Handley contend that “to deny colonial and environmental histories as mutually constitutive misses the central role the exploitation of natural resources plays in any imperial project” (10).

For Hogan, the history of Native people and nonhuman beings is interwoven. In “Weave,” she tells the story of Native people who worked in the past as traders; weaving buffalo hair into golden thread (406). This trade is impossible without the river and the bison. The speaker remembers the displaced bison and the many trips to the river. She writes, “and still we made a warm shawl, / remembering the bison, / its fur, like us now, not of our place” (407). The use of the simile in ‘like us’ adds to the connectedness between Native people and the world of fauna. People, animals, and rivers witnessed wars, traveling, and change (407). Vine Deloria Jr. contends that in the past Native tribes were systematically sought and wiped out (Custer 54). This systematic killing of people and animals influenced Native ecosystem. It is a slow violence where “accelerated species loss due to ravaged habitats are all cataclysmic, but they are scientifically convoluted cataclysms in which casualties are postponed, often for generations” (Nixon 3).

As an environmental activist, Hogan speaks of the abuses against flora and fauna since their destiny is entwined with that of the human beings. In “This America,” the speaker describes the life of insects and animals in the modern world. Their natural

habitats were changed because of the aggressive impact of colonization. Instead of the free natural spaces which they enjoyed before colonization, now their places become “caged.” (411). They “all encircled, the gnats in streetlights all brightened, / and the June bugs at the sewn screens, / the dogs in cages” (411). The speaker also laments the fate of the trees that were “cleared for the cattle” instead of thriving in a thick forest (411). The devastating effects of colonization impacted humans and animals as one interrelated component of the ecosystem. The antagonism between European settlers and non-human others was clear and visible. They created an ontological division between humans and other entities and claimed this view as universal (de la Cadena 342-344).

The aftermath of colonization is seen in nature. It is pictured in the imbalance created by European settlers in the biosphere. The abuse of nature led to “all the new fierce light, heat, drought / the missing water” and many other ecological issues (“Trail of Tears: Our Removal,” 358). The high sea level is one of the aftermaths of the settler’s disruption of Native ecosystem. Hogan describes how the seas travel through the graveyards of the “loved ones, / turning in their graves / to carry the stories of life to air” (“To Light”, 84). Hogan recounts the outcome of colonization on the climate in relation to the sea water that submerged the graves of the loved ones. These are the discounted casualties, both human and ecosystem, that resulted from war’s toxic or climate change that Rob Nixon describes as inadequately represented in strategic planning and in human memory as well (2-3). Therefore, Hogan uncovers this ecological imbalance interfolded with the memory of the dead ones so that she can keep her people’s struggle alive. Furthermore, water, for Hogan, signifies the mystical agent that separates life from death, past from present and Native American culture from the European colonial lifestyle. For Hogan, water signifies the disputed politics and the geographic and cultural spaces between countries and communities that hold unequal power (Julie Sze 476).

As water becomes an agent for environmental justice, trees too are represented as bearing witness to the colonial oppression against Native Americans. They are integrated in their story of survival and endurance. Hogan describes this natural unity and writes “Even the trees with their rings / have kept track / of the crimes that live within /and against us” (“To Light” 84). Colonial hegemony is documented by nature. Trees are personified here and pictured as human beings. The tone of the speaker carries a sense of sadness and anger because colonial history always provokes such feeling in Native people. Hogan contends, “Few people outside our cultures can comprehend the depth of the pain, despair, and for many of us native peoples, anger. To other Americans, this history, if thought of at all, belongs to a far past, but in truth these events are recent and remembered” (Woman 79). Showing the European violence against Native people as reaching beyond human beings is Hogan’s distinctive ecological vision to decolonize Native land and call for environmental justice.

IV. Tribal Traditions

Oral tradition is a key component in Native American cultural heritage. It has sustained Native cultures for many centuries. It is the language of Native people and communities. Simon Ortiz⁽³⁾ believes that the language of culture in Native tribal communities is usually in story, song, advice, or counsel. It is in what is called the oral tradition ("Indigenous continuance" 289). According to Ortiz, this oral tradition has its own purpose. It has been the political resistance and the spiritual defense which has been achieved by the oral tradition ("Towards a National Indian" 10). As a matter of fact, oral tradition in general and storytelling, in particular, is a vital source of spiritual strength and empowerment for Native people. Hogan believes that the belief system has failed Native people. However, they find their empowerment in the tribal stories (Woman 16).

In Hogan's poetry, stories are never separate from the fight for the tribal land and environmental justice. In fact, they are as ancient as the land itself. Stories play a significant role in keeping Native cultures alive. For Hogan, "stories are not only capable of affecting the environment but of actually building the world itself" (Harrison 5). They are "as old as the great seas / breaking through the chest, / flying out the mouth" ("To Light", 84). In these lines, the speaker shows the forceful power of the stories through the visual imagery of the stories "breaking through the chest" and "flying out the mouth". Tribal stories empower Native people and connect them to their history and land. Hogan believes that story is a power that defines our world and our human being, and it outlines the rules and intricate laws of human beings in relationship with all the rest of creatures ("First People" 9).

Hogan's emphasis on the significance of storytelling enhances the importance of culture in the Native ecological struggle. Joni Adamson explains how the Diné and Pueblo peoples perceive their homeland through the power of tribal stories. She asserts that in spite of five centuries of oppression, domination, and dispossession, the Diné and Pueblo peoples still feel a deep connection to lands that carry profound cultural and personal meaning and significance. Lands that are alive with story (American Indian 48). They tell different stories from their oral tradition and recognize the places where the events of these stories occurred. They still see the places where they live as a middle place in which nature and culture are not separate, but inseparably connected (American Indian 48). Katherine Chandler describes Hogan's terrestrial spirituality in *Dwellings* and its connection to stories and earth. She states that Hogan transforms her experiences with nature into stories and the power of these stories arises from our deep understanding of ourselves and others and also of the undefinable spirit of a living world (24). Throughout her poetic work, Hogan applies this method of transforming her tribal experiences into stories that interweave tradition, history, and the spiritual living world.

This intermingling method is visible in Hogan's representation of wolves in Native worldview. In Native American cultures, nonhuman beings are considered as relatives. They are sisters and brothers, messengers to the ancestors, and part of the creation story. The colonial domination of Native nations introduced the practice of subduing others, especially animals. Hogan recognizes the fact that separating humans from their non-human relatives is a colonial strategy to replace the culture of Native people. She emphasizes the fact that protecting the world of fauna and flora is related to the survival of the Native people and their culture since ecological resistance is inseparable from cultural struggle. For the European colonizer, the domination of the land entails the control of living creatures. In "Not So Very Long Ago," for example, Hogan pictures the European unjust wolf hunts. She tells the story,

Some men came to this place, they say,
and they never came out.
They killed the wolves
And then they turned from their human flesh
Into water, into thin air, into something
Waiting for rain to fall
And when it did, they sank into ground,
All because they killed the wolves. (317)

In Native worldview, "killing a wolf is like killing a brother" (Carroll and Lawson 121). When Ojibwe activists knew about the state-sanctioned wolf hunts in the states of Minnesota and Wisconsin, they opposed the state's decision and started an Internet campaign to save the wolves. The other-than-human entities are considered members of the Native communities. For Native communities to be treated justly, people must recognize that "community" means the more than-human world and that justice must mean learning of and restoring or caring for the ecological relations of the other beings in those lands (Sinclair 101). When Hogan calls for environmental justice, she is emphasizing the ecological connections between humans and non-human others.

In Native American oral tradition, some humans are transformational; they can take the shape of human or any other creature. This transformational quality in some characters has its unique function. According to Adamson, "characters with transformational qualities are often employed to address social and environmental injustices by suggesting that 'boundaries are permeable'" ("Whale" 34). What is striking about Hogan's characters in the above-mentioned poem is their racial background. They are not Native people, but European settlers. Hogan's identity twist highlights her ecological message of inclusiveness and wholeness; showing the settlers as supernatural beings who can take many forms before they are punished by nature for their killing of the wolves. Hogan's employment of cosmological oral tradition reinforces her ecoresistance strategy and call for environmental justice. Subsequently, "Within

the context of the Native American Wisdom Tradition, spoken words always carry with them the secrets and

Powers of the natural world” (Morris, 96).

Another significant component of Native tribal tradition is traditional indigenous medicine which has been used for many centuries. The Native American healing practices include stories, herbs, ceremonies, prayer and most importantly harmony with earth. Most of the time, their treatment of the sickness is earth-based. In Hogan’s poetry, the earth becomes the source of healing and remedy. She writes, “and the mica hand / our people heated / to pass over the bodies of the ailing” (“Artifact: The Mica Hand 403”). For the speaker, the earth is not only a home; it is also the source of health and wellbeing. Like humans, the tribal healing traditions originate from the earth; “It is our mineral history / coming, as we do, / from this earth.” (403). In fact, it is the idea of living in accordance with nature that underlines the concept of balance in Native American cultures. The balance between human, ecological, and spiritual systems is called by many Native people as “Good Medicine” (Portman and Garrett 458). Hogan’s environmental vision pictures a world where humans can coexist with the nonhuman others. It is this type of environmental imagination through which an activist can imagine different worlds, both within and beyond the realm of everyday human experience which might strengthen the continuing global struggle for social and ecological justice (Huggan 720).

In conclusion, as a poet and environmental activist, Hogan writes poetry that is replete with memories of the land and the people who inhabited it. Her tribal memory revolves around the colonial domination and violence against humans and nonhumans. It captures the ecological destruction by the European colonizer. In her environmental representation of the land, people, and tribal traditions, Hogan reflects the connectedness between culture and nature. In order for Native people to decolonize themselves and the land, they have to seek their environmental justice along with the right to self-determination. By employing a tribal vision of interdependent connection between humans and nonhuman things, Hogan reinstates a new strategy of ecoresistance. Her ecological vision redefines an environmental renewal where Native traditional wisdom of unity and wholeness is accepted and respected.

Notes

- (1) Native Americans are the pre-Columbian inhabitants of North and South America and their descendants. “The terms American Indians and Native American are used interchangeably to refer collectively to Native peoples from hundreds of tribal nations in what is now the United States” (Hirschfelder and Molin, 9).
- (2) He is a poet, novelist, playwright, storyteller, and artist. His novel *House made of Dawn* led to a

writing renaissance for Native American literature and was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1969. He is the author of *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, *The Ancient Child*, *The Names: A Memoir*, *In the Bear's House* and other collections of poetry.

- (3) He is a major figure in Native American Renaissance. He has published many books of poetry, short fiction, and non-fiction.

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