



**An Eco-critical Analysis of  
Selected Poems in Linda  
Hogan's: A History of Kindness**

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## **An Eco-critical Analysis of Selected Poems in Linda Hogan's: A History of Kindness**

### **Abstract**

At the present time, the whole world is concerned with the ecological crisis which has enormous effects on human life. Therefore, in her latest collection, *A History of Kindness* (2020), Linda Hogan, who is considered as one of the leading poets of Nature, calls for ecological harmony. In fact, Hogan's *A History of Kindness* is viewed like a call for reconciliation between the human and nonhuman worlds. This paper aims to provide an eco-critical analysis of selected poems in Hogan's *A History of Kindness* to demonstrate how human culture concerning environment affects and is affected by Nature. Thus, the paper points out to Hogan's views of Nature and environment which are affected by her Indigenous American Indian culture. In addition, it tries to reveal Hogan's views of the crisis of environmental degradation and her solution of the crisis through her call for integration into Nature.

**Keywords:** Eco-critical Analysis - Nature – Environment – American Indian Culture - Effects.

## Introduction

Although Nature has always been presented in literature, especially poetry, but now the need to address Nature has become a necessity, particularly after the continuous increase in ecological crisis. The ecological crisis has enormous effects on human life. These effects including biodiversity loss, soil erosion, deforestation, scarcity of water, and climate change form a major threat to the life of human beings on Earth. Thus, this paper tries to shed light on this serious issue in Hogan's *A History of Kindness* (2020).

Hogan is considered as eco-poet because of her views of Nature. Hogan's views towards Nature and the environment have supported her to be an important writer of eco-critical writings. She has protested for Nature and the environment to convey the increasing threats to them. In her poems, she seeks to reconcile the relationship between the human and nonhuman worlds. In other words, she looks for a new approach to Nature in the sense of a deep ecological perspective.

In fact, deep ecology is an environmental philosophical theory which aims to protest against man's domination of Nature. It refers to the process of asking deeper, more profound question about Nature, character and culture (Devall 2). It emerges as a way of developing a harmony between human and nonhuman world. Deep ecology's basic principle is the belief that nonhuman world should be respected as well as human world. In other words, nonhuman beings have their own right to flourish and live. Indeed, most of deep ecology's perspectives are a part of American Indian culture. Consequently, Hogan, as one of American Indian writers, in her writing, has pointed out to these perspectives as a way to

heal the alienation between man and nature. In fact, these perspectives have shaped Hogan's eco-literary discourse.

Hogan's eco-literary discourse should be described as eco-poetry. Eco-poetry is a new term for contemporary poetry that contains significant ecological messages. It focuses on the relationship between man and the natural world seeking harmony between them. Jonathan Bate points out that eco-poetry begins "not as a set of assumptions or proposals about particular issues, but as a way of reflecting upon what it might mean to dwell upon the earth"(266). Thus, eco-poems become as a tool which aims to alter the reader's perspectives from being anthropocentric to being bio-centric. In fact, this definition is in line with Hogan's perspective of Nature.

To find out more about Hogan's ecological perspectives, this paper will apply eco-critical theory to selected poems in Linda Hogan's *A History of Kindness*. The paper will try to reveal how human culture concerning environment affects and is affected by Nature. So, the paper will give a brief summary of eco-critical theory to explain the concept of eco-literary discourse and the theory as a whole. In addition, the paper will explore briefly Hogan's life and culture to show her style and attitude in writing. Then, the paper will analyze Hogan's poems: "One Creation", "To Be Held", "Lost in the Milky Way", "Recuerdo", in *A History of Kindness*, to demonstrate how these poems affect and are affected by Nature.

### **Ecocriticism**

Ecocriticism is a new critical theory which studied the relationship between literature and the natural world. It tries to show how nature is presented and treated in literary texts. In other

words, ecocriticism seeks to show how nature is empowered or subverted in a literary text. According to Serpil Oppermann, ecocriticism "takes an earth-centered approach to literature, and an ecological approach to literary criticism. Ecocriticism mainly concentrates on how literature interacts with and participates in the entire ecosphere"(2).

In 1978, the term "ecocriticism" was coined by William Rueckert, in his essay "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism". In fact, ecocriticism takes times to develop into an accepted critical theory. By the early 1990s, ecocriticism expanded as a critical theory. The first professional organization of ecocritics was formed in 1992, in the USA, which was named: The Association for Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE). It was followed by the founding of its journal: *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* (ISLE) in 1993. Then, *The Ecocriticism Reader* in 1996, by Cherll Glotfelty who is considered the pioneer of ecocriticism and the first professor of literature and environment in the USA. In the UK, ecocriticism emerged through the publication of Jonathan Bat's *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition*. Then, in 1998, an organization was formed with its own publication: *Green Letters*, which was first published in 2000.

Ecocriticism is divided into waves to historicize its movements. The first wave of ecocriticism (1970 – 1990) concentrated on the portrayal of the world beyond the text in literature to find the most effective literary forms that could transmit an environmental message. It owed more to deep ecology, environmental philosophy and social movement, which asserts that human beings are superior to non-human beings. In other words, the biosphere becomes the main focus of concern.

The second wave of ecocriticism (1990 – 2000) is unlike the first wave which believes that human beings and nature are opposed to each other. It owed more to social ecology, which seeks to oppose the split between human beings and the physical environment and prompts the need to heal them. The third wave of ecocriticism (2000 - ) has elements from the first and the second waves of ecocriticism, but it aims to a widely understanding of ecocritical practice through environmental issues. It "recognizes ethnic and national particularities and yet transcends ethnic and national boundaries; this third wave explores all facets of human experience from an environmental view point" (Adamson 6-7).

Ecocriticism as a literary theory is used to interpret the literary works. Ecocritics take an ecocritical approach to a topic in their analysis to interpret it. They analyze the ways in which a literary text addresses or oppresses the natural world. Ecocritics, also, seek to understand the operation of existence between the human and non-human by addressing ecological issues in literature. In other words, they seek to show how the physical world is represented in a literary text and human relationship with it. In fact, ecocritics' ecocritical approaches to literature are numerous. The most important approach, as it is the main approach in the research's analysis, is how "human culture is connected to the physical world affecting it and affected by it" (Glotfelty xix). In addition to the previous approaches, ecocritics, in their interpretation of a literary text, seek to show how wilderness and pastoral are represented in literary texts, and how biological themes appear in literary works.

## Linda Hogan's Life and Culture

Linda Hogan is a contemporary American Indian poet, novelist, playwright, activist, essayist, and environmentalist whose writings often reflect human and non-human relationships. Hogan has won several awards that testify her success. She won the American Book Award (1986), the Lannan Literary Awards (1994), the Colorado Book Award (1996), the Lifetime Achievement Award (1998), the Wordcraft Circle Award (2002), the Mountains and Plains Booksellers Spirit of the West Literary Achievement Award (2007), and in 2016, she was awarded the Thoreau Prize from PEN.

Hogan was born on 16<sup>th</sup> July, 1947, in Denver, Colorado. Hogan's father, Charles C. Henderson belongs to the Chickasaw Nation, who served as an army sergeant in the United States army. Her mother, Cleona Florine Bower, was a housewife belongs to white descent from Nebraska, California. Because of her father's job, Hogan traveled regularly to different places, but she felt sense of belonging and identity in Oklahoma, where her father's family came from. She says "Oklahoma was the place that shaped me with its loving people, beauty, and heat. It was where, always, I encountered kindness" (*The Woman* 116).

In fact, Hogan's childhood was troubled childhood. Hogan was a shy child who suffered from lack of love and care from her parents. Her family's poverty obliged Hogan to work several jobs after school in order to be able to get some money that would enable her to get her necessities. As a shy girl, she was afraid of speaking and her silence became a problem at school. In her book: *The Woman Who Watches over the World: A Nature Memoir*, she expresses her sufferings when she says:



I see that my life was shaped by a poverty of the heart, the lack of present love, which left me open to love from other places, because I was a child untouched by my mother's hands, a child so disturbed as to have almost no language. I say this now, looking back, knowing full well that my mother cooked for us and did all that was considered her duty, yet could not love. (43-44)

Her hunger for love was the main reason of her love affair, at the age of twelve, with an old man, Robert, when her family moved to Germany, for three years, because of her father's career. Then, when her family returned back to the United States, Hogan had to leave her lover, Robert. Unfortunately, her suffering and pain had increased even she prayed every day for death. In fact her deep sense of miserable childhood was the main motive of her adoption of two miserable children, Tanya and Sandra, both are Native American, in 1979. She hopes that the adoption could heal the wounds of these two girls.

Hogan's adoption of two girls, also, stems from her American Indian culture. According to the Indian Child Welfare Act in 1978, which allowed indigenous American families to adopt children of indigenous American tribes, Hogan adopted the two girls to give them reconnection to their native environment. In other words, her interest in adoption, essential cultural feature of Native Americans, shows her "effort of protecting everything in nature"(Martanovschi 57). Hogan comments:

Adoption, like fire, was a life-changing event. It was not as easy as

being a grafted tree. My father had learned to create trees that bore two kinds of fruit and would heal two together into one, and this was what I believed adoption would be, old trees bound with newly grafted limbs, bearing blossoms and fruits. With humans, it isn't as easy as trees. (*The Woman* 125-126).

Another essential cultural feature shared by Native Americans, especially writers, is the oral tradition. Indeed, Native Americans' oral tradition is considered the main source of Native American literature. It is the main method of recording the culture, and beliefs of Native Americans through centuries. In fact, Hogan's "works act a continuation of the oral traditions and songs that remain a crucial part of many tribal societies, but with one notable exception, that they are written rather than spoken"(Bleck 36). Hogan did not begin writing until she was in her twenties. Because of her miserable childhood, Hogan did not have books in her house. In an interview by John A. Murray, Hogan asserts that her experience in writing stems from her Chickasaw heritage not from reading. She has been more interested in visual art and in being outdoors. She adds "I am very concerned with human, animal, and plant survival, traditions that are ecologically sound, and indigenous knowledge systems, and how to convey these understandings of the world to a wide readership" (7). Hogan's first form of writing was poetry because she believes that poetry allows her to express things that she cannot in her normal language. In fact, Hogan's indigenous background is a source of inspiration. Hogan's first collection of poems: *Calling Myself Home* (1978) is about life in Oklahoma, like her first novel: *Mean*

*Spirit* (1990) is about life in Oklahoma and the crisis of the oil boom in Oklahoma, in 1920s. Indeed, Native Americans' culture continues to be necessary element in Hogan's works: *Daughters, I Love You*(1981) ,*Eclipse*(1983), *Seeing through the Sun* (1985), *Savings* (1988), *The Book of Medicines*(1993), *Dwellings* (1995), *Solar Storms* (novel) (1995), *Animals* (1997), *Power* (novel) (1998), *The Sweet Breathing of Plants: Women Writing on the Green World* (2001), *The Woman Who Watches over the World: A Native Memoir* (2001), *Rounding the Human Corners* (2008), *Indios* (2012), *Dark. Sweet* (2014), and *A History of Kindness* (2020).

In fact, American Indian culture, which plays an important role in forming Hogan's personality, is affected fiercely by nature. The important role of nature in Native American culture is a well-known fact. According to Anthony J.Cichoke, "almost every Native American culture believes that everything -every animal, living creature, plant, rock, tree, mountain, and even water- has a soul. Therefore, all of nature must be treated with respect and honored" (200). Indeed, this belief obviously shapes most Indian Americans' literature. Dean Suaggee asserts that although most of Indian Americans do not live the life of their ancestors, but the traditional Indian Americans' culture and beliefs are still crucial components of the identities of contemporary Indian Americans (4).

In fact, Hogan's works reveal her Native American's perception about nature. As a Chickasaw writer, Hogan's interest in Native American spirituality is reflected in her writings, as spiritual habits and beliefs are used to be an essential part in Native Americans' lives. In her poems, Hogan respected everything in nature, as every natural element in Native Americans' beliefs has a

spirit. In other words, natural elements: water, land, tree, sun animals, and others are spiritual symbols in Native Americans' culture. So, as a Native American poet and environmental activist, Hogan's poems express her deep concern in nature. Thus, in this paper, an eco-critical analysis of selected poems in Hogan's *A History of Kindness* will be used to show how Hogan's culture concerning environment affects and is affected by nature.

*A History of Kindness* is a collection of poems by Linda Hogan focusing on living in harmony with self, and the rest of nature. In other words, it calls for kindness which is a necessary cure at the present time. As an activist, Hogan's view of environmental justice is considered the main idea on which her collection is based. In fact, "*A History of Kindness* is an activist's petition for humanity to discover peace and harmony with our world" (Hogan, 1). In her interview by A. J. Baumel, Hogan suggests that the best way to confront injustice is not violence, but it is love. Indeed, violence is not able to solve suffering. She says:

This is a book that is not only about poetry and its quiet moments of magic, but about wisdom given by Elders and teachers we all want and need in our lives. It contains history as it dwells in the present, affecting our lives in the now, and goes beyond to the ways we learn to love ourselves and others... [t]hat is what I hope. That a person will feel the book, want to know real history, want to live in a harmony. In tradition ways of well-being, of health and spirituality, to live in

harmony with all the rest is a desire and need (1-5).

### **"One Creation"**

This poem is considered Hogan's manifest call to reconciliation with nature. The title, "One Creation", displays Hogan's belief that human and nonhuman worlds are one creation; it is an activist's request for humanity to live in peace with world. The poem consists of four stanzas which are unrhymed free verses, and line length is variable. The first consists of eight lines and the second is nine line stanza, but the third and the fourth stanzas have the same number of lines, six lines. It has eight full sentences. The first ends at the last line in the first stanza. The second ends at the six lines in the second stanza, and the third ends in the last line in the second stanza. The fourth ends in the second line in the third stanza, the fifth ends in the third line in the third stanza. The sixth ends in the fourth line in the third stanza. The seventh ends in the last line in the third stanza. The eighth ends in the last line in the fourth stanza.

In the first stanza, the speaker says that she is a warrior who wants the world to survive. In other words, in the sense of deep ecological approach toward nature, Hogan, here, announces that she is an activist who fights against environmental degradation. Influenced by her Native American culture, Hogan utilizes the word 'warrior', which reflects her ancestor's culture. It refers to the suffering of ancient American Indians of persecution and genocide. So, she follows her ancestors' steps in resistance, but another kind of resistance which is the resistance to environmental degradation.

The speaker, also, says that this earth gave birth to creatures like the bison and the vultures of Tibet that consumed the last mystics. The mystics who taught us that we are always a breath away from bullets. In these lines, Hogan refers to her ancient ancestors who enjoyed wisdom. They warned future generations of bloody conflict in which human beings will live in general and Native American in particular. In accordance with ecological approach toward nature, in this stanza, Hogan wants to display the importance of the Earth, which is one of a Chickasaw perspective. In this stanza, Hogan utilizes personification. She describes the earth as a mother who gave birth. In fact, this stanza with personification of the earth conveys the sacred role of the Earth in Native Americans' culture.

In the second stanza, the poet says "I am from a line of songs, / a particle of history told by the wrong people"(68). Hogan utilizes metaphor. She portrays herself as a line of songs that chronicled the Native Americans' history, but unfortunately these songs are told by the wrong people, White European people, who colonized and distorted Native Americans' life and land. Hogan continues in her activist message saying "a country before lines of division"(68). She refers to the suffering of American Indians as they were subjected to deportation and extermination. These lines, with metaphor of the poet and songs, are derived from Hogan's culture. According to American Indian culture, songs are part of traditional storytelling which was an important tool that recounted and chronicled Native American history and culture.

Then, in accordance with ecological approach toward nature, Hogan produces an activist's solution for humanity. She asserts that the power that the world need, to live in peace and harmony, is in the forest. In other words, she employs ecological image of

stopping forest extermination and increasing forest preservation. Indirectly, Hogan sheds light on the crisis of climate change and finds solution in respecting nature.

In the next lines, Hogan expresses her nostalgia for her ancestors. She says that the forest, which she is waiting, heard the stories of her ancestors. Hogan states that she dreamed that her ancestors passed down the canyon, where she lives, telling their stories that reflect Hogan's need of her native heritage. Continuing in displaying her ancestor's perspectives in dealing with nature, she says that, like her ancestors, she loves the stones, mosses that live among them, and the creek that runs all year. In fact, she portrays her culture through symbols -stone, creek, and moss- that have their significance in the culture of Native American. In accordance with Native American culture, all humans and nonhumans have spirits, so they must be treated with respect. Thus, Native American relationships with nature tend to preserve ecological system.

In the third stanza, Hogan explains the real cause of the ecological crisis that the whole world suffers from. She states "It is hard for some to know / the world is a living being"(68). That is why some people misdeal with nature as they do not believe that the world is a living being. If everyone realized this fact and believed in it, like Native Americans, the world would not have suffered from the ecological crisis. Then, the poet states "That's why the books of the Maya were burned / like the ones of Australia and the close North"(68). She gives an example of the ignorance of some people of the fact that the world has a soul that should be sacred. The example of burning Maya's books in the 16<sup>th</sup> century is a clear example of tyranny and injustice against a feature of nature. Here, she gives an implicit reference American

Indians' suffering of genocide. Thus, Maya's books, like those that were oppressed in through centuries, is only evidence that many people do not understand the fact that features of nature, humans or nonhumans, should be respected.

In the last stanza, the poet, in a sense of solace, gives her wisdom to her readers and the whole world. She states that we can cry over things like lost love and dead people, but we have to remember the bird, the bison, and their sadness. In other words, humans and nonhumans are equal. People grieve over the loss of love or the death of a person, and the bird and the bison grieve for what happened to them, killing and extermination. Thus, all humans and nonhumans have feelings and spirits that should be sanctified. Then, she says "and how the land hurts / in more chambers than one small heart could / ever hold"(68). Hogan in the last lines gives an important warning; she states that the land hurts us more than a small heart can handle. In other words, if ecological degradation continues, we cannot bear the wrath of nature. Thus, the poem is an obvious ecological message from Native American poet who believes in the sanctity and spirituality of the whole world.

### **"To Be Held"**

In this poem, Hogan expresses her wishes and draws a strong line of connection between humans and trees. "To Be Held" is unrhymed free verse poem. It is a seventeen-line stanza with short lines. The poem consists of two full sentences. The first ends at the fifth line, and the second ends at the last line. The title of the poem, which repeated in the poem making effective anaphora, reflects severe desire of the speaker which will be known through the analysis of the poem.



The speaker says "To be held / by the light / was what I wanted, / to be a tree drinking the rain, / no longer parched in this hot land"(97). From line one to five, the speaker conveys her wishes. The speaker likes to be held by the light. In other words, she wants to be happy in a world without problems. As the poem proceeds, the speaker continues stating her wishes. She wants to be a tree. Then, the speaker begins to describe the tree saying that this tree drinks rainwater and is no longer thirsty in this hot land. In these lines, there are two personifications. The first one is shown when the speaker portrays the light as a human being who can held people, and the second personification is shown when the speaker portrays a tree as a human being who can drinks the rain. In fact, both of them reflect Nature's ability to comfort and feed itself and other creatures.

In accordance with ecocritical theory, the poem reflects how human culture affects and is affected by nature. 'Tree' is one of the remarkable symbols of Native American culture. To show the importance of trees in Native American culture, Hogan announces her desire to be a tree. According to indigenous culture, a tree is the source of life, food, healing, and power. Lillana Usvat exposes the significance role of trees in indigenous life; she states that "a tree symbolizes permanence, longevity and its firm base symbolize the concept of 'roots' and an ongoing relationship with natural surroundings. Such positive characteristics and attributes of trees lend themselves to being revered"(1). In addition, Hogan addresses the issue of climate change obviously in the fifth line by saying "no longer parched in this hot land"(97). Here, Hogan points to the change in the characteristics of agricultural soil ; it has not become suitable for the growth of trees and plants.

From line six to line ten, the speaker continues in exposing the rest of her wishes stating that she wants "to be roots in a tunnel growing / but also to be sheltering the inborn leaves / and the green slide of mineral / down the immense distance / into infinite comfort"(97). The speaker expresses her desire to be roots growing in a tunnel, but also protecting the inborn leaves and the green slide of mineral until the end of life. In accordance with Hogan's perspective, which believes in the importance of roots as they have souls, she refers to the significant role of roots through the use of personification. The roots are portrayed as a person who helps and protects other creatures to survive. Hence, the speaker sends a message to all human beings that they should struggle in life, regardless of difficult circumstances facing them.

In line eleven, the speaker exposes another characteristic of soil change in stating that "the land here, only clay"(97). In accordance with ecocritical theory, Hogan protests against environmental degradation which led to desiccated soil and hot climate. In spite of the bleak and dismal image in this line, but the speaker gives a picture of hope in the following lines (12-13). The speaker states that although this land is barren, but it is still able to absorb its need of water. In other words, it is still suitable for cultivation. Thus, there is still hope for reform, whatever the circumstances. In addition, Hogan exposes her cultural perspective which asserts that everything in nature, for example clay, has its need as well as humans.

In the last lines in the stanza (14-17), the speaker gives her advice stating "the way a tree always shelters the unborn life / waiting for the healing / after the storm / which has been our life"(97). In accordance with ecocritical theory, the speaker explains how trees are able to maintain themselves and resist

environmental changes, and therefore the speaker calls all humans and nonhumans to draw strength from trees, which are able to resist difficulties and live. Hogan explains the difficulty of life in using a metaphor; she compares life to storm. Finally, Hogan gives hope to humans in the possibility of preserving and healing environment as well as themselves. In other words, she finds solutions to ecological crisis in embracing the concept of deep ecology.

### **"Lost in Milky Way"**

Through the initial reading of this poem, it becomes clear to the readers that it is about life and after death. But Hogan's real message is to expose the distance and separation between human and nonhuman world providing spiritual healing to help reconnection between them. The title of the poem refers to the loss of both humans and nonhumans without spirituality. The poem consists of ten stanzas with three lines, triplet stanzas, which are unrhymed free verses.

In the first stanza, the speaker says that "some of us are like trees that grow with a spiral grain / as if prepared for the path of the spirit's journey / to the world of all souls"(14). In accordance with deep ecology which asserts that humans and nonhumans are equal creatures, Hogan, in the first stanza, utilizes simile, "some of us are like trees", to assert the spiritual similarity between humans and trees. Hogan is affected by her Native American culture in which spirituality is an essential feature.

In the second stanza, the speaker begins to illustrate the path of the spirit's journey. She states "it is not an easy path" to show the difficulty of the path of the spirit's journey. Then, she continues in describing the journey stating that there is "a dog stands at the

opening constellation / past the great helping hand"(14). According to Native American culture, dog are symbols of loyalty, friendship, and protective powers. The relationship with dogs is very essential to Indian American people as dogs symbolize spiritually clarity and wisdom. In addition, it is a symbol of scarifying as some Native American tribes scarified dogs in religious ceremonies. Influenced by her culture, Hogan chooses a dog to symbolize spiritually clarity and wisdom in that sacred place in the spirit's journey. In accordance with ecocritical theory, Hogan's use of personification, giving human qualities to a dog, asserts that dogs are equal to humans. So, they should be respected. Thus, there is no separation among humans, animals, stars, galaxies, or any creature on this world.

In the third stanza, the speaker continues in describing the dog's mission in that path. She states "the dog wants to know, / did you ever harm an animal, hurt any creature, / did you take a life you didn't eat?"(14). Hogan uses, again, a personification; she portrays the dog as a wise man who asks essential questions. The dog, which symbolizes wisdom in Native American culture, asks the passengers in the spirit's journey vital questions. In accordance with ecocritical theory, these questions summarize the main reasons of the current ecological crisis and environmental injustice. In other words, in this stanza, Hogan resists environmental degradation.

In the fourth stanza, the speaker states "this is the first in your map". She wants to say that what has been described in the previous stanzas is the first station in the path of the spirit's journey. Then, the speaker continues in describing the next station in that path. She states "there is another / my people made of the great beyond / that lies farther away than this galaxy"(14). In these

lines, Hogan's influence of her Native American culture is obvious. She states that there is another station in the spirit's journey where her ancestors, who made of greatness, reside, but far from this galaxy. They are great and deserve this great status because they have preserved Nature. Here, Hogan refers to the effect of preserving Nature by obtaining that special place in the spirit's journey. According to ecological theory, Native Americans have served as an essential source of inspiration for deep ecological ethics (Devall 96).

In the fifth stanza, the speaker continues in describing the next station in the path of the spirit's journey. She states "it is a world that can't be imagined by ordinary means / after this first one / the next could be a map of forever"(14). Hogan wants to say that the world of all souls cannot be imagined by ordinary means and this place should be the map of the world forever, as all creatures will find eternal rest. In other words, she calls for equality among all creatures.

In the following stanzas, the speaker describes the map. In the sixth stanza, she states "it could be a cartography / shining only at some times of the year / like a great web of finery"(14). Here, the speaker tries to describe the map that she has accepted for all creatures, saying that it lights up once a year as a wonderful web of ornaments. In the seventh stanza, the speaker states "some spider pulled from herself / to help you recall your true following / your first white breath in the cold". She states that the web of finery in that map was created by a spider that pulled the web from herself to help humans to recall their true following as well as their beginning. Hogan has been influenced by her culture in her use of the spider. According to Native American culture, the spider and its web symbolize the importance of recording the

complexities in humans' lives. While spider woman, like the one in the poem, symbolizes wisdom and education. Here, the female spider teaches humans how to go ahead in their future in true way by looking back to their past where Nature was clean and there were no environmental crisis.

In the eighth stanza, the speaker says "the next door opens and old woman / counts your scars. She interested in how you have been / hurt and not in anything akin to sin"(14). Here, she describes another station in the spirit's journey where an old woman asks the passenger essential questions that enable him / her to cross that path. According to Native American culture, in some Native American tribes, old woman symbolizes knowledge and teaching. She assists other and imparts valuable knowledge to them. Thus, Hogan's use of "old woman" reflects her interest in knowing the causes that led to the environmental crisis and calling for avoiding them.

Finally, in the last stanzas, ninth and tenth, the speaker gives her advice to her readers, she states "from between stars are the words we now refuse; / loneliness, longing, whatever suffering / might follow your life into the sky"(15). She wants to say all that you suffer from, such as loneliness, longing, and other things, because of your actions can catch up with you in that path. In other words, she calls people to consider on their dealings with environment, because their actions will chase them in the sky. Then, she states "once those are gone, the life you had / against your will, the hope, even the prayers / take you one more bend around the river of the sky"(15). The speaker states that once these things are gone, it means here the end of any suffering for human or nonhuman, we will win the rest and peace that we will find around the river of sky. In these lines, Hogan's spirituality

manifests in her message and advice to her readers, saying that we cannot be happy, even in the afterlife if we do not stop harming each other and our environment. In summary, this poem demonstrates that Hogan's interest in the discourse of environmental justice which is rooted in indigenous spirituality.

### **"Recuerdo"**

This poem is a kind of meditation on water's symbolic role in Native American culture. The poem is unrhymed free verse poem. It consists of two stanzas; each stanza consists of eleven lines, and line length is variable. It has three full sentences. The first ends at seventh line in the first stanza. The second ends at the last line in the first stanza, and the third ends in the last line in the second stanza; the whole stanza, the second stanza, is one sentence.

In the first stanza, in Hogan's "Recuerdo" which means memory, the speaker tries to revive a beautiful memory. She says "let me take it through my heart again / that unchanging moment / you wading through the river / me wading toward you, laughing / the illumination of that moment / the shine of our skin / and clouds coming toward us"(17). Here, the speaker describes the lovely remembrance when she was wading in the other direction of her lover through the river. In accordance with ecocritical theory which asserts that human culture has an impact on and is influenced by nature, Hogan, as a Native American poet, addresses water symbols in her poem. In fact, water is a remarkable symbol of Indian American culture. Ann Greeley states:

For Native American, then, as for most indigenous spirituality, water retains an honored and indispensable place, an actual

force as well as symbolic image of life and death, creation and destruction, nourishment and deprivation: water exists as an autonomous and primeval element to be encountered with humility, respect, joy and caution. (158)

Hogan utilizes water in her poem as a source of healing. It is a site of a lovely memory from which the speaker is able to feel happiness. In fact, the memory which Hogan refers to is the memory of the harmony between humans and nonhumans to find peace. In other words, she calls for reducing environmental degradation.

Then, in the rest of the stanza, in the second sentence, the speaker describes the clouds which are coming toward the speaker and her lover. She states "they are the sky beings who live above / with tears ready to fall / like the origins of rain; no one knows / what they have seen in their previous fluid form"(17). Again, affected by her Indian American culture, Hogan points out to the spiritual role of water. Here, by using personification, clouds, the gaseous form of water, is described as observers who have tears that ready to fall because of what they have seen. In other words, Hogan refers to environmental injustice against nature and Indian American people, and call for change.

In the second stanza, the speaker states "for now, I merely go through that one day again / remembering, traveling toward the river"(17). Again, the speaker points out to the significant role of that moment. The speaker asserts that she lives on the memory of that moment. In accordance with Native American culture, the elemental force of water, besides being a source of life, manifests



in its ability in healing. In other words, Hogan affirms humans' need to a spiritual reconnection with the environment.

Then, the speaker states "past the place where snakes shed their skin / against stone"(17). The poet explains here that on her journey towards the river, she passed a place where snakes shed their skins. According to Native American culture, snakes' ability to shed their skins associated them with rebirth and healing. Affected by her Native American culture, Hogan, in her use of snakes, indicates the possibility of healing. Thus, healing has become one of the main goals of the poet. She calls for healing through the elements of the environment, whether through water or snakes.

Then, in the rest of the stanza, the speaker describes snakes. She states "new, shining like a constant, / ceaseless stream of water / as it crawls across earth, changes and passes / blood memory, saltwater memory, / toward our laughter and joy / that moves once again through this heart"(17). The speaker continues to describe the snakes and states that those snakes shine and crawl like a continuous stream of water. This stream is able to change and pass the bloody and bitter memories that happened before, and then we can restore our laughter and joy. In fact, Hogan, again, emphasizes the effective and powerful role of water in healing the painful memories. These memories are the persecution and killing of her ancestors as well as the degradation of the environment; each of them suffering from environmental injustice. Thus, she utilizes water symbols - rivers, rain, tears, and clouds- to exhibit a deep connection between people and nature as a source of strength. In other words, water serves as a path to intimate relationship between humans and nonhumans. Thus, in this way it is a source of new life.

## Conclusion

This paper is an attempt to explain how Hogan's ecological perspective, which is shown in *A History of Kindness*, affects and is affected by indigenous Americans' environmental culture. In fact, the discourse of environmental Justice is displayed obviously in the analysis of Hogan's "One Creation", "To Be Held", "Lost in the Milky Way", and "Recuerdo", in *A History of Kindness*. She seeks to protect nature as well as humans and calls for ecological harmony. Hogan's ecological perspective is based on the spirituality and the tradition of American Indians who believes that humans and nonhumans have spiritual souls; therefore, all creatures must be honored and respected. Hogan's interest in Native American spirituality and tradition is shown in the analysis of these poems.

The ecocritical analysis of Hogan's "One Creation" displays Hogan's deep ecological approach toward nature. She fights against environmental injustice, and she refers to the important and sacred role of the Earth, in accordance with her indigenous culture. Likewise, she shows her ancestor's perspective in dealing with love with nature, which is a solution that the poet offers to preserve nature.

Then, Hogan's "To Be Held" demonstrates the strong relationship between humans and one of the elements of nature which is the tree. According to indigenous culture, a tree is the source of healing and life. Hogan displays the important role of trees by declaring her desire to be a tree. In addition, Hogan, in this poem. Addresses the issue of climate change and its serious dangers on soil and trees. In accordance with ecocritical theory, Hogan resists environmental degradation. She asks all

humans and nonhumans to draw strength from trees which are able to resist difficulties.

Hogan's "Lost in the Milky Way" implicates the distance and separation between human and nonhuman world, and she gives spiritual healing to reconnect them. In fact, this poem is about a spiritual journey. It shows how Hogan is affected by her indigenous culture in which spirituality is an essential feature. Influenced by her culture, in which dogs symbolize spiritually clarity and scarifying, Hogan chooses in her spiritual journey a dog to be an observer in the journey. In addition, she asserts her perspective of equality between animals and humans; therefore, they should be treated and respected in the same way. In accordance with ecocritical theory, the dog's questions for passengers reflect Hogan's resistance to environmental degradation. In the end of the poem, Hogan tries to give a spiritual message through her warning; she advises humans, if they want to have peace afterlife, they have to stop environmental degradation.

Finally, Hogan's "Recuerdo" is considered as a kind of meditation on water's symbolic role in Native American culture. In accordance with ecological approach toward nature, water is an essential spiritual symbol in indigenous culture. It symbolizes power, life, and death. So, it should be respected. Hogan's utilizes water symbols – rivers, rain, tears, and clouds- as sources of healing. In other words, she affirms human's need to spiritual reconnection with nature which is considered the effective reconciliation of ecological crisis.

Thus, the paper demonstrates the effective role of the Native American culture in shaping Hogan's ecological perspective, and reveals Hogan's views of ecological crisis. In addition, in these poems, she tries to reconcile the relationship between humans and nonhumans. In fact, Hogan's *A History of Kindness* contributes to find a solution to the environmental crisis as it calls for harmony between humans and nature.

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## التحليل النقدي البيئي لقصائد مختارة لليندا هوجان تاريخ اللطف

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### الملخص:

فى الوقت الحاضر، يهتم العالم أجمع بالأزمة البيئية التى لها تأثيرات هائلة على حياة الإنسان. لذلك، فى مجموعتها الأخيرة، تاريخ من اللطف، تدعو ليندا هوجان، والتى تُعد واحدة من الشعراء الرائدین المهتمين بالطبيعة، إلى الانسجام البيئى. وتهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تقديم تحليل نقدي بيئى لقصائد مختارة فى مجموعة تاريخ اللطف لليندا هوجان، لتوضيح كيف تُؤثر الثقافة البشرية المتعلقة بالبيئة فى الطبيعة وتتأثر بها.

يُشير البحث إلى آراء هوجان فى الطبيعة والبيئة التى تأثرت بثقافتها الأصلية الأمريكية. فضلاً عن ذلك، يحاول البحث أن يوضح آراء هوجان فى أزمة التدهور البيئى وعلاجها للضرورة من خلال دعوتها للاندماج فى الطبيعة.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** التحليل النقدي البيئى، الطبيعة، البيئة، الثقافة الهندية الأمريكية، تأثيرات.