

Re-centering the Indigenous Perceptions of the Wolf in Selected Native American and Canadian Poetry

Asst. Instr. Estabraq Rafea Gharkan¹

Dept. of English- Faculty of Arts- University of Anbar

istabraqrafea@uoanbar.edu.iq

Asst. Instr. Shamam Ismail Otaiwi²

Dept. of English- Faculty of Arts- University of Anbar

shamam.ismail@uoanbar.edu.iq

Abstract :

Animals occupy a central position in Indigenous cultures. They play a vital role in shaping the cultural identity of the Indigenous peoples and reviving their worldviews. In the Native cultures, the animal world including animals like wolves and bears have strong ties with the human world. These ties are central to Native literature which closely investigates the rich and diverse perceptions of the wolf. However, many past studies limit their attention to approaching the relationship between man and the wolf from Ecocritical perspective. This article aims at recentering the indigenous perceptions of the wolf as a counter narrative to the discourse of settler colonialism which seeks to eradicate both indigenous peoples and wolves through demonizing them as threats to civilization. To achieve this aim, the article applies Gerald Vizenor's concepts of "survivance", postindian, "sovenance", "transmotion" as well as Linda Tuhiwai Smith's concept of knowledge sharing. The article concludes that by applying Vizenor's and Smith's concepts as a framework to examine Joy Harjo's "Wolf Warrior," Duncan Mercredi's "we are wolf" and Linda Hogan's "The Fallen," the indigenous perceptions of the wolf reemerge through memory and storytelling as anticolonial discourse to unsettle colonial knowledge about the indigenous peoples and wolves by reenacting the indigenous identity with regard to its interconnectedness to the wolf.

Keywords: (Harjo, Hogan, Mercredi, postindian, survivance, transmotion, Vizenor, storytelling).

1. Introduction

Indigenous people around the world share an intimate relationship with their natural environment which they deeply respect and view spiritually. An ancient Native American proverb sums up the relationship between Native Americans and nature: "We do not inherit the Earth from, our ancestors; we borrow it from our children" (Quote Investigator, 2013). This proverb encapsulates their interconnectedness with nature and their sense of

responsibility towards their worldview which shaped their culture for centuries. This worldview stands in sharp contrast to the mainstream Western capitalist and settler colonial tendency which views nature as a commodity to be exploited for material gain. The importance of the natural world to the Natives of North America is rooted in history and continues to the present time. Nature is an integral part of their culture, philosophy, art, etc. This connection stems from the belief in the spiritual value of all aspects of the natural world, from trees to animals and even inanimate objects. It is believed that all aspects are connected to the greater soul of the universe. The following quote shows how a Native American woman interprets her people's connection to nature.

We are the land ... that is the fundamental idea embedded in Native American life ... the Earth is the mind of the people as we are the mind of the earth. The land is not really the place (separate from ourselves) where we act out the drama of our isolate destinies. It is not a means of survival, a setting for our affairs ... It is rather a part of our being, dynamic, significant, real. It is our self (Allen, 1979, p. 191)

Consequently, many studies were devoted to dissecting this bond between man and nature, Gerald Vizenor, the prominent Native American novelist, poet and scholar, notes that these close associations with nature and animals are “the source of native omniscience and consciousness. The literary interpretations of this presence have presumed the doctrines of nativism, animism, naturalism, realism, and other theories” (Vizenor, 1995, p. 667). However, this indigenous conception of nature was looked down upon by settler colonialists who considered it primitive, wild, and savage. In light of the current ecological crisis resulting from the damaging consequences of exploiting the natural environment, Indigenous Peoples' lifestyle and worldviews provide sustainable solutions. From an Indigenous point of view, the answer to climate change is decolonization which restores the Indigenous ways of living to replace the colonial exploitive relationship with the land with a relationship of affinity and kinship. In the North American context,

Indigenous peoples have been concerned over the destruction of the ecological system since the arrival of Europeans over five centuries ago. Thus, climate change is tied up with “ongoing processes of colonialism, dispossession, capitalism, imperialism/globalization and patriarchy” (Virtanen, Siragusa, & Guttorm, 2020, p.36).

Although Native Americans hunted, fished, and collected what they needed to sustain their lives, they were careful not to over-hunt or over-fish out of their belief in the strong ties connecting the Indigenous peoples to the land and the whole ecosystem which should be treated with respect. Additionally, Native American literature showcases an extensive use of animal imagery in their folklore and tales. Animals are at the core of the Indigenous stories of creation which prove their affinity with man and their sacredness, for instance, in the Quileute tribe myths, Quileute proclaim that the two sided mythical creatures *Dokibatt* and *K'wa'iti* created the first humans by transforming a wolf (Ruby, Brown, & Collins, 2013). As a result, in Native American traditions, “the wolf is considered to be the highest spiritual teacher in the kingdom” (Hassan & Sadek, 2015, p.61). Native Americans admired the hunting skills and swiftness of wolves. In his *Of wolves and men*, Lopez remarks that “Most Indians respected wolf’s prowess as a hunter, especially his ability to always secure game, his stamina, the way he moved smoothly and silently across the landscape” (Lopez, 1978, pp. 102-103). Early Native Americans were hunters which made them look at wolves with respect because, just like the wolf, they relied on nature and hunting to survive.

Additionally, the social structure of the wolf pack resembles that of the family ties of Native Americans, since wolf packs protect each one of their members. John Theberge notes that the wolves “social bonding and caregiving behavior are second only to those of humans and other social primates” (qtd. in Busch, 1995, p. 47). Thus, the wolf is considered sacred to Native Americans and this explains the appearance of wolves in Native American mythology and stories. It is used as a symbol of the Indigenous peoples’ resistance to the prevalent mainstream European worldview, and of their physical and cultural survival.

Nonetheless, with the arrival of privileged European settlers, wolves were villainized, and the stereotype of the 'Big Bad Wolf' prevailed within the colonizers' hierarchy. Today, the image that most people associate with wolves is that of vicious, bloodthirsty killers. This fearsome portrayal symbolizes evil and is rooted in the colonial ideology that sought to disrupt the relationship between man and nature. According to this settler-colonial ideology, all aspects of nature, including native people, are considered wild and consequently had to be tamed, or else they would be deemed dangerous and evil. Early stories told to children, such as 'Little Red Riding Hood' and 'Peter and the Wolf,' contributed to this narrative by planting fear and villainizing wolves in the public consciousness.

Thus, the coexistence and interconnectedness among all aspects of nature was disrupted by Western European colonialism which seeks to violently displace Indigenous people from their land and replace them with new settlers. This violent process is not limited to the land. It seeks to uproot the culture as well. In *The Colonizer and The Colonized* (1965), Albert Memmi describes how the new settlers who arrived at the colony from the metropolitan center rapidly realized their position of privilege and their sense of racial superiority. This White privilege is achieved at the cost of exploiting land and resources from the indigenous people (Memmi, 1965, pp.8-9). This sense of superiority damaged the spiritual connection between man and nature by imposing colonial binary thinking and a hierarchical worldview. This system of binary oppositions imposed dichotomies such as man versus nature, civilized versus uncivilized, etc. As a result, indigenous authors utilized Indigenous perceptions of the wolf in their literary writings to deconstruct the colonial binary opposition system and restore their authentic cultural identity.

2. Literature Review:

This literature review examines existing studies on the literary representation of wolves. While a vast body of research has explored the symbolism of the wolf in literature, this review will focus on a selection of key works relevant to the current research. Several studies have traced the historical portrayal of wolves, comparing their contrasting symbolism in ancient myths and modern narratives. Additionally, these studies highlight how Indigenous authors have

utilized the wolf as a means to create a counter-discourse, challenging dominant cultural narratives. For instance, Classen and Monje in their article *We Are Not Raised by Wolves: Decentering Human Exceptionalism in Nature* compare the portrayal of the wolves in some of the earliest known stories to humanity such as the Sumerian Epic of Gilgamesh, Romulus and Remus of Rome, and Mowgli's story in Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book*. In these narratives, there is a friendly co-existence of the wild, especially wolves, with the humans. In contrast, the contemporary representation of the wolf showcases a violent savage killer. The writers argue that this shift is rooted in white supremacy which separates humans from nature by placing them at the center and decentering nature, thus, allowing them to exploit nature to the fullest under the guise of a concept known as human exceptionalism. The writers call for a rethinking of our relationship with nature by emphasizing that our current life view is problematic and dangerous for both nature and ourselves (Classen & Monje, 2023).

Correspondingly, the article titled *Relationships between Indigenous American People and Wolves 1: Wolves as Teachers and Guides* traces the historical relationship between humans and wolves using indigenous stories from different cultures. The authors frame their argument in terms of history mixed with ecological and evolutionary knowledge to suggest that Indigenous people were resilient and tough and needed companions that resembled them. They argue that tribal people and wolves have reciprocal respect towards each other. According to the authors, wolves taught tribal people how to hunt and survive. Therefore, the conclusion of this article refutes the claims by Eurocentric scholars who assumed that Natives domesticated wolves and dominated them. It confirms the friendly relationship between *Homo sapiens* and *Canis lupus* which lasted until the arrival of settler colonizers (Fogg, Howe, & Pierotti, 2015).

In *Truth and Symbolism: Mythological Perspectives of the Wolf and Crow*, Bukowick explores the symbolic implication of the wolf and crow in the mythology of the West. Bukowick focuses on the Bible, Roman and Greek mythology, Native American folklore, Shakespeare, and Aesop's fables. Ultimately, the study contends that the negative representations of these animals in Western literature are untrue to the actual nature of the animals.

Additionally, the study investigates the reasons behind these negative associations. It concludes that humans use these animals to project their follies and bestow on them the aspects of human nature that are unacceptable and evil (Bukowick, 2004). In Contrast, Šefraný in a 2020 study discusses the portrayal of the wolf in American environmental literature over the last two centuries comparing its depiction in fictional and non-fictional works. Šefraný classifies wolf representation in the literature using a typology outlined in the works of Barry Lopez and Sean Kipling Robisch. The author notes that both environmentalist and fiction writers began to portray wolves positively to represent the wild and untamed nature, an aspect that is rare in our current culture. Therefore, this portrayal leads to the over-romanticization of the wolf in the public mind which can cause harm. Ultimately, the author concludes that due to such a portrayal the wolf becomes both a predator and a scape-goat (Šefraný, 2020).

On the other hand, several studies have analyzed the symbolism of the wolf in literature from an Eco-critical or Eco-feminist perspective to highlight the interconnectedness between people and nature. For instance, In a 2018 Study entitled *The Wolf: Reenacting The Myth And Archetype In American Literature And Society*, Junquera examines the representation of the wolf in two American novels *The Crossing* by Cormac McCarthy and Clarisa Pinkola Estes's *Women Who Run with the Wolves* from an eco-critical and ecofeminist perspective to shed light on the contrasting perception of the wolf as it is either romanticized or demonized. Additionally, the study calls attention to the need for environmental intervention to rescue this creature from over-hunting. The study concludes that the wild wolf is a symbol of liberation from a patriarchal society that seeks to liberate the unconscious minds of women from the oppression of their society (Junquera, 2018).

Likewise, in their paper entitled *Animal Symbolism in Indian American Poetry* (2015), Hassan & Sadek analyze and compare the different metaphors and images employed by Native American poets such as Leslie Marmon Silko, Joy Harjo and Linda Hogan regarding different animals including the wolf. The study is conducted in light of Eco-criticism to dissect the interconnectedness between animals and humans. The paper concludes that

these Native American poets utilize animal imagery to restore their golden days when all creatures lived together in harmony before the arrival of the colonizer (Hassan & Sadek, 2015). Whereas De Mancelos focuses on the poetry of the Native American poet, Joy Harjo, the author argues that Harjo creates a counter-narrative in her poetry by employing natural elements such as rivers, rocks, and animals to denounce the Anglo-American abuses of nature. De Mancelos notes that Harjo “reconstructs and reinterprets myths connected with the land” (De Mancelos, 2007, p.6). As a result, the author writes that “her poetry is part of an ethnic ecopoetics, with a strong universal appeal.” (Ibid)

Finally, Deyab employs an Ecocritical framework to highlight the eco-critical issues in Farley Mowat’s *Never Cry Wolf*, Deyab confirms that the writer warns against the danger of demonizing wolves and advocates for humanizing wolves, and joins the recent concerns that are raised by environmental advocates regarding the importance of restoring the relationships between humans and animals. Deyab concludes that through his text Mowat disregards ancient and even modern negative connotations of the wolf which depict this animal as a savage killer, thereby the writer creates a counter-myth to the previous one which the writer confirms is merely a projection of people’s inner savagery (Deyab, 2017).

As noted in the previous literature review, many studies have explored the representation of wolves in literature. These studies often trace the historical symbolism of the wolf, highlighting how it has evolved over time. Indigenous writers, in particular, have used wolf imagery to reclaim their cultural identity. Additionally, numerous studies have applied eco-critical frameworks to analyze wolf imagery, especially in Native American literature, which emphasizes the bond between humans and nature.

However, no studies have specifically addressed the Indigenous perceptions of the wolf in the selected poems through the lens of Gerald Vizenor's concepts of survivance, sovenance, postindian identity, and Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s ideas on knowledge sharing as acts of resistance. Thus, this research will fill this gap in literature.

3. Reasserting the Indigenous Perceptions of the Wolf in Selected Native American and Canadian Poetry

The relationship between the indigenous peoples and the animal world forms an integral part of their cultural identity. At the center of their cultural identity is their kinship with the natural world including animals specifically the wolves which they consider as source of wisdom, spiritual guidance and healing (Hassan & Sadek, 2015). These indigenous perceptions of the wolf are widely circulated in indigenous literature, particularly in Native American and Canadian poetry. The interconnectedness of the humans and the wolves occupies a central position in “Wolf Warrior” by the Native American poet, Joy Harjo. In this poem, Harjo fuses her native oral traditions, storytelling and cultural memory to create wolf narratives to counter the discourse of settler colonialism. The speaker of the poem narrates the story of a Native American boy’s journey to camp on Mount St. Helen. His journey is rendered as:

... a journey toward the
unknowable, and that night as he built a fire out of twigs and
broken boughs *he remembered* the thousand white butterflies
climbing toward the sun when he had camped there last
summer. [Emphasis added]
Dogs were his beloved companions in the land that had chosen
him
through the door of his mother. His mother continued to teach
him
well, and it was she who had reminded him that the sound of
pumping oil wells might kill him, turn him toward money. So
he and his
dogs traveled out into *the land that remembered* everything,
including butterflies, and the stories that were told when light
flickered from grease. [Emphasis added] (25-35)

Here, Harjo stresses the importance of memory and the act of remembrance as central to the indigenous worldview and cultural identity. This aligns with Vizenor’s concept of “sovenance” which he defines as “that sense of presence in remembrance,

that trace of creation and natural reason in native stories” (Vizenor, 1998, p. 15). For Harjo, memory takes the form of a spiral, a traditional Muscogee Creek image, which challenges the colonial concept of time and place (Al-Dahiyat & Majdoubeh, 2023). Spiraling memory symbolizes the temporal fluidity between past, present, and future which allows memory to travel in a nonlinear manner. Therefore, “a movement back into the past simultaneously and paradoxically is a movement into the future” (Bryson, 2005, p. 58). Here, the spiral movement of the active, dynamic and nonlinear memory across time and space “opens up the boundaries that demarcate time present and time past and infuses it with [Harjo’s] tribal awareness of a cosmic continuity” (Paul, 2011, p. 231). This active act of remembrance creates “sovenance” which, according to Vizenor, reclaims the active presence of the indigenous peoples and redefines them as “postindians,” not as vanishing “indians”. In the quote above, both the boy and the land engage in remembrance which is a manifestation of native kinship shaped by the power of memory. It means that through the relationality between the boy and the land and their interdependence, memory centers kinship practices which assert the sovereignty of the indigenous peoples, and shapes the core of their Creek identity which is based on inclusion through memory (McLaughlin, 2019). In “Wolf Warrior”, this identity formation process through Creek kinship memory is enacted in narrating the story of the human-animal contact from Native perspective:

That night as he boiled water for coffee and peeled potatoes he saw a wolf walking toward camp on her hind legs. It had been generations since wolves had visited his people. The dogs were awed to see their ancient relatives and moved over to make room for them at the fire. The lead wolf motioned for her companions to come with her and they approached humbly, welcomed by the young man who had heard of such goings-on but the people had not been so blessed since the church had fought for their souls. He did not quite know the protocol, but knew

the wolves as relatives and offered them coffee, store meat, and fried potatoes which they relished in silence. He stoked the fire and sat quiet with them as the moon in the form of a knife for scaling fish came up and a light wind ruffled the flame.

The soundlessness in which they communed is what I imagined when I talked with the sun yesterday. It is the current in the river of your spinal cord that carries memory from sacred places, the sound of a thousand butterflies taking flight in windlessness (36-52).

In the quote above, Harjo seeks to unsettle the colonial belief in the animosity between dogs and wolves on one side, and humans and wolves on the other. Upon seeing the wolves, “The dogs were awed to see their ancient relatives and moved over to make room for them at the fire.” This sheds light on the coexistence of the dogs and the wolves in the natural world. Instead of attacking the wolves as a threat to the young boy, the dogs welcomed them as relatives. The wolves were also welcomed as relatives by the boy. It is this act of knowing and identifying the wolves as relatives which subvert the colonial concept of the man-eating wolf and erases the colonial boundaries between the human and the animal. Harjo also aims at stressing the affinity between humans and animals by focusing on the social life and the human-like behaviors of the wolves who were “offered ... coffee, store meat, and fried potatoes which they relished in silence.” The spiritual communion between the boy and the wolf in a natural setting dominated by silence, which takes the form of a ceremony reminds the speaker of the sacredness of the wolf. This indigenous reconceptualization of the wolf narratives subvert the colonial association of the wolf with evil and cruelty.

By mentioning that “Food was scarce, pups/were being born deformed, and their migrations, which were in essence a ceremony for renewal, were restricted by fences...” (55-57), Harjo seeks to

reintroduce the wolves not as man's cruel killers, but as "animals struggling to retain a place in this world" (Jesse, 2000, p. 40) because of the destructive impact of colonialism. Harjo reclaims the affinity between the human and animals by presenting the wolf as an interlocutor who establishes a dialogic relationship with the young boy:

"We can't stay long," the wolf said. "We have others with whom to speak and we haven't much time." He packed the wolf people some food to take with them, some tobacco, and they prayed together for safety on this journey. As they left the first flakes of winter began falling and covered their tracks. It was as if they had never been there. (64-69)

According to Vizenor, "Natives create their identities in "dialogical relations" with many others, with nature, and with those who must bear the indian simulations of dominance. Natives have sustained over many centuries a dialogic circle of natural reason, resistance, the tease of presence, and communicative mediation over names, histories, and sovereignty" (p. 22). This means that through the human-wolf contact and their affinity, Harjo reshapes the native identity as postindian, rather than indian, because for Vizenor, "the indian has no native ancestors...The indian is a simulation, the absence of natives; the indian transposes the real, and the simulation of the real has no referent, memories, or native stories. The postindian must waver over the aesthetic ruins of indian simulations (ibid). Thus, the postindian is a discourse of survivance and transmotion which connotes motion and active presence (Vizenor, 1998, p.15).

Although the human-wolf contact came to an end, "...the story burned in the heart of this human from the north and he told it to everyone who would listen, including my elder friend who told it to me one day while we ate biscuits and eggs in Arizona" (70-72). This telling and retelling of the story is transmotive because it proves the postindian survivance which subverts the colonial discourse of 'misrecognition' which assign false and

distorted identities to the native people. For Vizenor, survivance is both survival and resistance

In *Decolonizing Methodologies*, the indigenous scholar, Linda Tuhiwai Smith highlights the indigenous-knowledge sharing process through storytelling. In the book, Smith speaks about:

...sharing knowledge between indigenous peoples, around networks and across the world of indigenous peoples. Sharing contains views about knowledge being a collective benefit and knowledge being a form of resistance. Like networking, sharing is a process that is responsive to the marginalized contexts in which indigenous communities exist... Sharing is also related to the failure of education systems to educate indigenous people adequately or appropriately. It is important for keeping people informed about issues and events that affect them. It is a form of oral literacy, which connects with the story telling and formal occasions that feature in indigenous life (162).

Thus, in “Wolf Warrior”, Harjo employs storytelling as a form of ‘oral literacy’ by sharing Indigenous wolf narratives with indigenous and non-indigenous communities to create a counter narrative to the demonizing perceptions of colonialism and its dominant narratives which associate the wolf with evil, hatred and fear. Harjo continues: “The story now belongs to you, too, and much as pollen on the legs of a/ butterfly is nourishment carried by the butterfly from one/ flowering to another, this is an ongoing prayer for Strength for us/ all” (73-77). This poem which, according to Harjo, “is an ongoing prayer for Strength for us all” proves Vizenor’s concepts of survivance and postindian identity. Native people attain survivance through the act of storytelling and transmitting the indigenous-knowledge through memory, which revitalizes the indigenous worldviews and actuates their active presence in the same way a butterfly moves from one flower to another and nourishes them with pollen on its legs. In other words, the poem reaffirms the persistence of the indigenous wolf narratives despite the oppressive

narratives of colonialism.

This survivance in the face of colonialism is at the core of Duncan Mercredi's "we are wolf." Mercredi is an indigenous Canadian poet who incorporates oral elements of his Cree culture to indigenize his written poetry. The Wolf is a prominent animal which Mercredi employs in many of his poems. "we are wolf" is published in a collection of poems entitled *Duke of Windsor: Wolf Sings the Blues* (1997). The title and the first line of the poem establishes the affinity and the spiritual sameness between the native people and the wolf. In *Of Wolves and Men*, Lopez (1978) states that Indians believe in the affinity between themselves and the animal world. For Lopez "To fit into the universe, the Indian had to do two things simultaneously: be strong as an individual, and submerge his personal feelings for the good of the tribe. In the eyes of many Native Americans, no other animal did this as well as the wolf" (Lopez, 1978, p. 104). In addition to expressing the interconnectedness between the indigenous people and the wolves, the line "we are wolf," carries sad undertones. Both the indigenous people and the wolves are:

hunted to near extinction
driven deeper into our past
hidden in shadows
forced to dance in secret
to a silent drum
lying in wait
in tiny spaces
set apart to be changed
unable to shape ourselves
in our past image (2-11)

Indigenous peoples and wolves suffer eradication and displacement at the hands of the colonizers who repressed the rich indigenous culture (Minor, 91). According to scholars like O'Brien, the displacement of the indigenous peoples and the wolves mainly takes the form of what he calls as "extinction narratives," which depict the indigenous peoples as "persistently ancient" and "mired in the static past." Similarly, the colonial wolf extinction narratives

render the wolf as dreadful, greedy, evil and cunning. This colonial conceptualization of the indigenous peoples and the wolves set them in opposition to the civilized society (Moses, 2022, pp. 7-8). However, Mercredi seeks to reclaim the sovereignty of the indigenous peoples over their land, identity and culture, and to reaffirm their survivance through oral stories. “we are wolf” is an example of Mercredi’s adaptation of the native oral stories into printed poetry. The style of the poem is evidently influenced by the native oral traditions. It breaks the Western formal rules of writing. This “undermin[ing of] the normative rules of literature [is] a means of rejecting the formal impositions of western hegemony” (Moss, 2016, p. 493). The poem lacks punctuation, capitalization, fixed rhyme and a regular rhythm. The poetic diction is simple and straightforward. The poet avoids using long lines, and focused mainly on short lines of varying length. In addition to using simple diction and short lines, Mercredi employs alliteration and assonance to enhance the musicality and orality of the poem. He utilized the passive voice by using expressions such as ‘hunted’, ‘driven’, ‘hidden’, ‘forced’, ‘lying’, ‘set apart’ and ‘judged.’ Such technique which omits the doer of the action is intended to avoid depicting the indigenous people and their culture as victims of colonialism. According to Vizenor “the subversion of western literary structures [is] a way to reclaim the lost signifier of pre-colonized identity (Moss, 2016, p. 296). He explains “Natives and their stories actuate a presence, not an absence (p. 14). According to Cariou (2020), “the wolf’s howl is a kind of call to community, a prompt for other Indigenous voices to join in, to stand up for themselves and to be a part of the group”(p. 10). This is closely relevant to Vizenor’s concepts of survivance and postindian identity. At the end of the poem, Mercredi repeats the title of the poem, “we are wolf”, but with a different relation to the text of the poem. While the title at the beginning of the poem affirms the affinity and establishes the vulnerability of the indigenous peoples and the wolves who face the threat of eradication and displacement posed by colonialism, its use at the end of the poem proves the survivance of the indigenous peoples and the wolves.

Vizenor's concept of survivance and Smith's concept of knowledge sharing as anti-colonial projects are also evident in Linda Hogan's "The Fallen." In this poem, the speaker describes the wolf as "starved in metal trap, / teeth broken/ from pain's hard bite, / its belly swollen with unborn young" (7-11). Hogan emphasizes the wolf's vulnerability by focusing on feelings of starvation and pain, seeks to warn the readers against viewing the wolf from a colonial perspective, and encourages them to feel empathy, not fear or hatred, towards the wolf. Then, she goes on to share with her readers the symbolic significance of the wolf in native cultures:

In our astronomy
the Great Wolf
lived in the sky.
It was the mother of all women
and howled her daughter's names
into the winds of night. (11-16)

In the quote above, the Great Wolf "watches over the earth like a mother over a daughter and sings songs of healing and nurture" (qtd. in Sadek, 2013, p. 66). Thus the kinship between the humans and the wolves is established through maternal images which redefine the predator-prey relationship as mother-daughter relationship. Here the wolf is a source of compassion and healing. Hogan's reference to "the Great Wolf" as "the mother of all women" hints at the indigenous worldviews, their mythology, creation stories and land-based knowledge. Hogan asserts the survivance of the indigenous knowledge by forging strong ties between the indigenous peoples and the wolves through the creation story. Survivance is achieved through transmotion. Vizenor explains "The connotations of transmotion are creation stories, totemic visions, reincarnation, and soverenance; transmotion, that sense of native motion and an active presence, is sui generis sovereignty. Native transmotion is survivance, a reciprocal use of nature, not a monotheistic, territorial sovereignty. Native stories of survivance are the creases of transmotion and sovereignty. (Vizenor, 1998, p.15). Hogan subverts the colonial dichotomies of man/civilized and nature/uncivilized. Hogan depicts

the cruelty with which the new people, the settlers, treat the wolves. She writes:

But the new people,
whatever stepped inside their shadow,
they would kill,
whatever crossed their path,
they came to fear.

In their science,
Wolf as not the mother.
Wolf was not wind.
They did not learn healing
from her song.

In their stories
Wolf was the devil, falling
down an empty,
shrinking universe,
God's Lucifer (17-31)

Hogan closely examines the colonial mentality which is driven by the blind desire to control through violence. This system of colonialism is enhanced by colonial scientific knowledge which is totally different from indigenous knowledge. Therefore, Hogan seeks to decolonize the colonial knowledge which refuses to respect the wolf and demonizes it as an enemy of civilization.

Conclusion

The article concludes that in “Wolf Warrior”, Harjo emphasized the affinity between the indigenous peoples and the wolf, which subverts the colonial discourse through storytelling and memory. The interconnectedness of the indigenous peoples and the wolves is established through engaging the two in

a dialogic relationship in which the wolf's act of speaking to and spiritual communion with the boy serves as the core to the process of indigenous identity formation and perceptions of the wolf. Through storytelling, memory, and dialogue, Harjo undoes the colonial discourse which renders the indigenous peoples as absent and vanishing, and views the wolf as cunning, evil, cruel and greedy. Thus, Harjo succeeds in redefining the colonial predator-prey relationship and the colonial characterization of the man-eating wolf. "Wolf Warrior" reasserts the active presence and survivance of the indigenous peoples and their cultures. The poem also sheds light on the sharing of indigenous knowledge as an act of resistance which decolonizes the colonial knowledge regarding the indigenous peoples and the wolves. In "we are wolf", Mercredi integrates elements of his Cree oral traditions into his written text to counter settler colonialism which seeks to eradicate the indigenous peoples and the wolves. According to Mercredi, colonial eradication and displacement of the indigenous peoples and the wolves are closely related to the settler colonial narrative which views them as extinct. Despite the threat of eradication, indigenous peoples and wolves reassert their survivance and refuse to be treated as extinct or victims. In "The Fallen", Hogan employs a native creation story that revives the indigenous perceptions of the wolf as a source of compassion, protection, wisdom, and healing. In this way, Hogan seeks to educate the readers about the need to treat the wolves with respect as sacred animals, not to be hated and feared as enemies.

References

Al-Dahiyat, Bayan & Ahmad Y. Majdoubeh (2023). Imagining a Poetics of Loss. *Arab Studies Quarterly*. 45(2):134-153. <https://www.scienceopen.com/hosted-document?doi=10.13169/arabstudquar.45.2.0134>

Allen, P. G. (1979). Iyani: It goes this way. *The Remembered Earth: An Anthology of Contemporary Native American Literature*, 191, 191.

Bryson, J. S. (2005). *The West Side of Any Mountain: Place, Space and Ecopoetry*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press.

Bukowick, K. E. (2004). *Truth and symbolism: Mythological Perspectives of the Wolf and Crow*. Boston College Electronic Theses and Dissertation <http://hdl.handle.net/2345/489>

BUSCH, R.H. (1995). *The Wolf Almanac – A Celebration of Wolves and Their World*. Connecticut: Lyons Press.

Cariou, W. (2020). Introduction. In D. Mercredi, *mahikan ka onot: The poetry of Duncan Mercredi* (pp. 4-12). WLU Press.

Classen, C. L., & Monje, D. (2023). We are not raised by Wolves: Decentering human exceptionalism in nature. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 26(4), 465-480.

De Mancelos, J. (2007). When the Beasts Spoke: The Eco-poetics of Joy Harjo. *Journal of American Studies of Turkey*, (26), 69-73.

Deyab, M. S. A. (2017). An Ecocritical Reading of Farley Mowat's Never Cry Wolf. *American Journal of Arts and Design*, 2(3), 60-68.

Fogg, B. R., Howe, N., & Pierotti, R. (2015). Relationships between indigenous American peoples and wolves 1: Wolves as teachers and guides. *Journal of Ethnobiology*, 35(2), 262-285.

Harjo, J. (1994). *Wolf Warrior*. In J. Bruchac (Ed.), *Returning the gift: Poetry and prose from the First North American Native Writers' Festival* (pp. 144-146). Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press.

Hassan, A. E. S., & Sadek, S. (2015). Animal symbolism in Indian American poetry. *European Scientific Journal*, 11(11).

Hassan, A. E. S., & Sadek, S. (2015). Animal symbolism in Indian American poetry. *European Scientific Journal*, 11(11).

Hogan, L. (1993). *The Book of Medicines*. Minneapolis: Coffee House P.

Jesse, L. (2000). *Wolves in Western literature* (Chancellor's Honors Program Project No. 391). University of Tennessee. https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_chanhonoproj/391

Lopez, B. H. (1978). *Of wolves and men*. New York: Scribner

Martín Junquera, I. (2018). *The Wolf: Reenacting the Myth and Archetype in American Literature and Society*.

McLaughlin, O. (2019). *Remembering Kin: Constructing Creek Tribal Sites of Memory* (Doctoral dissertation, Oklahoma State University). SHAREOK. <https://shareok.org/handle/11244/321554>

Moses, K. (2022). "Indians, wolves, and colonists: How colonial power left an incomplete framework for wolf narratives in the Native Northeast". *The Trinity Papers* (2011 - present). <https://digitalrepository.trincoll.edu/trinitypapers/107>

Moss, J. L. (2016). Defining Transcomedy: Humor, Tricksterism, and Postcolonial Affect from Gerald Vizenor to Sacha Baron Cohen. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 19 (5), 487–500. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367877915595476>

Quote Investigator. (2013, January 22). *We do not inherit the Earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children.* <https://quoteinvestigator.com/2013/01/22/borrow-earth/>

Ruby, R. H., Brown, J. A., & Collins, C. C. (2013). *A guide to the Indian tribes of the Pacific Northwest* (Vol. 173). University of Oklahoma Press.

Sadek, S. (2013). Grandmothers were my Tribal Gods": An Ecofeminist Reading of Linda Hogan's *The Book of Medicines*. *International Journal of English and Literature (IJEL)*, 3(5), 61-76. ISSN(P): 2249-6912; ISSN(E): 2249-8028.

Šefraný, P. (2020). The Wolf in American Environmental Literature: predator or scapegoat?. *Ostrava Journal of English Philology*, 12(2).

Smith, L. T. (2012). *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (2nd ed.). Zed Books.

Virtanen, P. K., Siragusa, L., & Guttorm, H. (2020). Indigenous Conceptualizations of "Sustainability".

Vizenor, G. (1995). Authored Animals: Creature Tropes in Native American Fiction. *Social Research*, 62(3), 661–683. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40971113>

Vizenor, G. (1998). *Fugitive Poses: Native American Indian Scenes of Absence and Presence*. University of Nebraska Press.

Williams, P. (2003). *Cultural Impressions of the Wolf, with Specific Reference to the Man-eating Wolf in England*, (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation), University of Sheffield.