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PATHS TO SUCCESS: ANALYZING THE JOURNEYS OF FOUR WOMEN OF COLOR

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Table of Contents

Abstract

This dissertation is a literary analysis as it applies to the writing of memoir. It is a study that focuses on the memoirs of four specific minority women who came of age during the historical time-period in this country known as the Civil Rights Era. Their stories reflect the times in which they were lived out. There are four points that were the lenses that I used in conducting the analysis of the four memoirs that are examined in this research study.

1. Purpose—the reason for which something is done.
2. Writing Style—a combination of diction and syntax that includes word choice, word order, sentence construction, organization, use of figurative language and symbolism.
3. Point of View—the perspective from which the story is told.
4. Theme(s)—the main idea or general message of the work, including the truth or believability of the author.

Literary analysis focuses on how plot/structure, character, setting, and many other techniques are used by the author to create meaning. It encourages one to think about how and why a poem, short story, novel, memoir or play was written. I used a number of data collection methods as the researcher of this study. The means of data collection I used came in the forms of interview transcripts, storytelling, autobiographi-

cal writing, documents such as journal entries and pictures, and audio and video recordings. In a basic linear and chronological approach, this research project encompassed the study of the experiences of four single individuals embracing stories from their lives and exploring the learned significance of those individual experiences.

In this study, I created an aggregate of narratives each bearing on the others. It is, by no means an exhaustive collection of women's memoir. The significance of this study lies in its contribution towards the practical critique that the writing of memoir has had on certain women of minority status.

Introduction

Despite the Civil Rights movement and social/legal strides for equal rights lasting well into the 21st century historically, all women in the United States have faced challenges trying to navigate."[1] the world as second-class citizens.[2] In particular, women of color have had added burdens due to racial and ethnic discrimination. [3] A few of these women have accounted for their lives by writing about them. While some have penned autobiographies, others have chosen the memoir form. Reading Adrienne Rich encouraged me to choose the memoir form when she explained, "in the language…[of] memoir … we can hear the end of secrecy, the beginning of protest, and the appeal for social change."[4] Zinsser and others reinforced my decision commenting that "Memoir isn't the summary of a life; it's a window into a life….A deliberate construction

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[1] William Zinsser, *On Writing Well*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2006), 134.

[2] https://www.brainyquote.com/search_results?q=glass+ceiling

[3] https://www.lifehack.org/articles/communication/25-empowering-quotes-feminism-famous-people.html

[4] Adrienne Rich, *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence* (New York: Norton, 1979), 67.

To flesh out the larger resistance against hegemony in the post-World War Two era, initially I read Maya Angelou's multiple memoirs,[5] bell hooks memoir: *Wounds of Passion: A Writing Life,*[6] and, *The Turquoise Ledge: A Memoir*[7], by Leslie Marmon Silko. Finally, I identified memoirs by Linda Hogan, Elva Trevino Hart, Anne Moody, and Grace Flores Hughes.[8] And, what eventually occurred to me was that, yes, the women

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[5]Maya Angelou was an African American woman who grew up in Stamps, Arkansas, under the care of her paternal grandmother, Annie Henderson. She authored nine memoirs that told the stories of her life from her early childhood through late adulthood. The first memoir, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings,* published in 1969, is a coming of age story that illustrates how strength of character and a love of literature helped her overcome racism and trauma; chronicles her life from early childhood through age seventeen. The second memoir, *Gather Together in My Name*, was written three years after her first book; it chronicles her life from the ages of seventeen through nineteen and depicts her life as a struggling single mother who temporarily slipped into a life of poverty and crime. Her third memoir is entitled *Singin'and Swingin'and Getting'Merry Like Christmas;* this book covers her life during her early twenties and her tells of her struggles to support her young son, form meaningful relationships, and forge a successful career in the entertainment word. The fourth installment of her life narratives is entitled, *The Heart of a Woman*; it recounts events in her life between 1952 and 1962; it follows her travels California, New York city, Cairo, and Ghana as she raises her teenage son, becomes a published author, becomes active in the civil rights movement.
All of God's Children Need Traveling Shoes is the title of her fifth memoir. It covers her life from 1962-1965; it recounts the years that she lived in Acca and Ghana. The sixth book is entitled, *A Song Flung Up to Heaven*. It is set between 1965-1968; two calamitous events frame the beginning and end of the book—the assassinations of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. Angelou describes how she dealt with these events and the sweeping changes in both the country and in her personal life, and how she coped with her return home to the United States. *Mom & Me & Mom* is the title of her seventh and final memoir; it focuses on her relationship with her mother, Vivian Baxter and was published in 2013.

[6] bell hooks, *Wounds of Passion: A Writing Life*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1997).

[7] Leslie Marmon Silko, *The Turquoise Ledge: A Memoir*, (New York: Viking, 2010).

[8] Anne Moody was an African American woman born into poverty and overcame immense obstacles to get a college education and become one of the most active and founding members of the Civil Rights Movement. The title of her memoir is *Coming of Age in Mississippi: The Classic Autobiography of Growing Up Poor and Black in the Rural South*. A Mexican-American woman Grace Flores-Hughes is a Mexican American woman who wrote a brutally honest and provocative tale of survival and socio-economic success. Her memoir is entitled *Grace Flores Hughes, A Tale of Survival: Memoir of an Hispanic Woman* Linda Hogan, an award winning Chickasaw poet, novelist, and memoirist wrote *The Woman Who Watches Over the World: A Native Memoir*. Here she recounts her difficult childhood as the daughter of an army sergeant, her love affair at age fifteen with an older man, the legacy of alcoholism, the troubled history of her adopted daughters, and her own physical struggles resulting from a fall from one of her beloved horses. Elva Trevino Hart wrote a memoir about her life as a child growing up in a family of migrant farm worker entitled *Barefoot Heart: Stories of a Migrant Child*. She brings to life her day-to-day existence while facing the obstacles of working in the fields in an environment that is frequently hostile to those who have little education and speak another language.

shared education and other survival characteristics and situations, the uniqueness of how they lived and strived for meaningful existences was also important. I discovered this through literary analysis, methodology guided my research process. It is a method of qualitative research wherein participants write their stories situated within some sort of social context and the scholar attempts to interpret and underline the significance of these lives. Literary analysis also focuses on structure, themes, point of view and many other techniques are used by the author to create meaning.[9] Essentially, the participants in this study reached out to me and claimed themselves as individuals.

My Backstory

My interest in the four stories became part of my journey not only as a researcher and doctoral student at the University of Oklahoma, but also as a woman. Although I belong to their children's generation I feel a kindred spirit for them all. The year 1963 has been noted for racial unrest and civil rights demonstrations. It was also the year I was born. The actual date was November 25, 1963, the day that John F. Kennedy was buried. My birth took place in a hospital that was not far from the book depository on Elm Street in downtown Dallas, where he was shot. Many were glued to their televi-

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[9]In her book, *Literary Analysis the Basics*, Celena Kusch claims, "Literature conveys sacred knowledge, teaches moral and social lessons, announces new ideas, records revolutions, tests the limits of cultural values, and show us our best and worst selves." In *Writing the Memoir: A Practical Guide to the Craft, the Personal Challenges, and Ethical Dilemmas of Writing your True Stories*, Judith Barrington pieced together a definition of memoir, "Memoir, on the other hand, is a story from a life. It makes no pretense of replicating a whole life. One of the important skills of memoir writing is the selection of the theme or themes that will bind the work together." In, *The Situation and the Story: The Art of Personal Narrative*, Vivian Gornick stated, "Memoir is neither testament nor fable nor analytic transcription. A memoir is a work of sustained narrative prose controlled by an idea of the self under obligation to lift from the raw material of life a tale that will shape experience, transform event, deliver wisdom."

sion sets watching the funeral of our nation's thirty-fifth president while my mother was giving birth. One of these people was my Mexican American Catholic father.

While the nation mourned over the life that had been taken from them, my mother grieved about the life she was bringing into the world. A white woman was in labor with another biracial child, a child who had been given to her by my father's virility, and who carried his DNA. I was the baby. My mother had committed a great sin in the eyes of her family, and the cultural mores of the time. She had married a Mexican.

Even though Martin Luther King had already given his "I Have A Dream" speech, and the social revolution had begun, in my mother's mind and family, the very idea of racial equality was absurd. In Dallas, Texas, my home town, at that time, Mexican people were not equal to white skinned people of European descent. They were generally thought of as the abject immigrant, only capable of doing jobs that required hard labor. Many of them were migrant workers, as were my father and his family. In *Barefoot Heart: Stories of a Migrant Child*, Hart began her story with these poignant words, "I am nobody. And my story is the same as a million others. Poor Mexican American. Female child. We all look alike: dirty feet, brown skin, downcast eyes."[10] Other than the fact that he was male, this description could easily be exchanged for one of my father while he was growing up in West Dallas.

As an adult, my father made choices that set him apart from the stereotyped version of a Mexican man. Even though he had had to quit school in the eighth grade to work

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[6] Elva Trevino Hart, *Barefoot Hart: Stories of a Migrant Child* (Tempe: Bilingual Press, 1999), 1.

with his family in the fields, somehow, he was able to train to become a car mechanic. This choice allowed him to step into what was for him *el otro lado*, which is a Spanish phrase that means the other side. The phrase refers to the other side of the Rio Grande, the river that serves as the natural border between the United States and Mexico. It is a common phrase that Mexican people use when referring to the United States. Working as a car mechanic eventually led him to the middle-class job of a car salesman. He dressed well and worked hard at that job, normally dominated by white men.

He was also a gifted musician who played the saxophone at night. He played in a band, The *Latinayres*, on the weekends in the most popular night club in Dallas at that time. It was the Carousel Club. It was owned by Jack Ruby, the man who killed Lee Harvey Oswald. He was one of my dad's friends who gave him money when he needed it. Although Ruby is a controversial character in US history, my family's memories of him are of his kindness to us and our father.

My parents met at a *salsa* class. She would later claim that this relationship began the period of her life that was to become the ruination of her. The biracial marriage of my parents lasted six years, during which she gave birth to three children that were half-Mexican. She carried the shame of having three *half breed* children on a daily basis, and it did not take long for the situation to become too much for her to bear. When I was just three-years-old, she decided to escape the consequences of that choice and flee. She ran off to find another life and did not come back for ten years.

Because he was not a very conventional or traditional Mexican man, he did not turn us over to the women in his family to bring us up. He did go to the priest in our Catholic parish for advice on how to handle the situation who advised him to "give us" to the Church so that we might have a *proper* upbringing. He did not think a single man was fit to bring up children, especially girls, on his own. My father did not want anyone else to have his daughters and finally came up with a solution to this issue. He decided to get married again to another white woman. He was determined to raise my sisters and me in the middle-class world of whites. He did not allow us to learn Spanish, go to school, or associate with Mexican American children. He also informed my sisters and me that we were not allowed to date or marry a Mexican man.

It was during the years of my father's subsequent marriages to two disparate white women that I was introduced to the belief system that being female, and especially a Hispanic girl, meant I was open game for white males. I went through verbal, physical, and sexual abuse at the hands of white stepbrothers and stepmothers who believed that they could do anything they wanted to my sisters and me with impunity. Unfortunately, that was the beginning of a pattern and cycle of violence that would last all the way into my adult life. The rationale in the abusers' minds seemed to have been that it was acceptable because I was Mexican, or least that is what they often said.

I accepted without understanding the circumstances in which I grew up and lived until I came to the university as a middle-aged woman. It was while I was studying and teaching at this university that I found my identity as a woman, and a *mestiza*, which is

a Spanish word that means mixed. The feminist classes I took filled in the gaps regarding much of the abuse and trauma of my past. Regarding violence against women, African American feminist and author, bell hooks, gets to the root causes of this issue in the following quotation:

> I believe that violence is inextricably linked to all acts of violence that occur between the powerful and the powerless, the dominant and the dominated. While male supremacy uses force to maintain male domination of women, it is the Western philosophical notion of hierarchical rule and coercive authority that is the root cause of violence against women, of adult violence against children, of all violence between those who dominate and those who are dominated. (118)

However, rather than wilt under oppression, women used the power of their collective voices and began to write their own stories. In this way, they began transforming their circumstances, social status, and personal identities. It was among these works that I identified the four women highlighted in this study. See for example:[11]

The Chicana studies class that I took opened the culture for me and changed my life. It started me on a path in search of the truth about my race and ethnic back ground. In

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11 *Don't Play in the Sun: One Woman's Journey Through the Color Complex.* The title of this book came from her mother. Novelist and memoirist Marita Golden learned as a girl that she was the wrong color. Her mother had absorbed "colorism" without thinking about it. Golden shows in this provocative book that biases based on skin color persist–and so do their long-lasting repercussions. *Sweeter Juice: A Family Memoir in Black and White* was written by Shirlee Haizlip.. She wrote it in an effort to reconcile the dissonance between her black persona and her undeniably multiracial heritage. While searching for her mother's family, Haizlip confronted the deeply intertwined but often suppressed tensions between race and skin color. Native American writer Joy Harjo's memoir is entitled *Crazy Brave: A Memoir.* The book details her journey to becoming a poet. It is a book about family and the breaking apart necessary to find a voice. Sandra Cisneros wrote a memoir entitled, *A House of My Own: Stories From My Life*. It has been called a jigsaw autobiography because it is made up of essays and images spanning three decades of her life.

that class, I was exposed to the truth regarding who I was.[12] As a result of that knowledge, I began to want to learn as much as I could about my people. My interest evolved into mainly that of Mexican women, as well as other women of color.

When searching the literature in order to situate my study among similar works, it struck me that much of what we understood about women of color in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries is from a movement perspective, how an individual is part of a larger historical narrative.[13] Despite the biographies that pepper this literature, I found research comparing women and illustrating how they as a group became part of the struggle for equality. This type of research far outweighed works focusing on the uniqueness of a life. I concluded that the latter could be highlighted to a greater extent. That is what this dissertation intends to do.

12.,*Goddess of the Americas: Writings on the Virgin of Guadalupe*, is an anthology edited by Ana Castillo. It examines the impact the Lady of Guadalupe has had on the people and culture of Mexico, and her influence beyond that country, in Latin America, North America, and Europe. *Genealogical Fictions: Limpieza de Sangre, Religion, and Gender in Colonial Mexico* is a book authored by Maria Elena Martinez. It has been called the first in-depth study of the relationship between the Spanish concept of *limpieza de sangre* (purity of blood) and colonial Mexico's *sistema de castas*, a hierarchical system of social classification based primarily on ancestry. *Borderlands La Frontera: The New Mestiza* is a book written by Gloria Anzaldua. The book is a semi-autobiographical work that includes prose and poems detailing the invisible "borders" that exist between Latinas/os and non-Latinas/os, men and women, heterosexuals and homosexuals, and other groups.

13*Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana, and White Feminist Movements in America's Second Wave* is a book written by Benita Roth. This book is about the development of white women's liberation, black feminism and Chicana feminism in the 1960s and 1970s, the era known as the "second wave" of U.S. feminist protest. Benita Roth explores the ways that feminist movements emerged from the Civil Rights/Black Liberation movement, the Chicano movement, and the white left, and the processes that supported political organizing decisions made by feminists. *The Trouble Between Us: An Uneasy History of White and Black Women in the Feminist Movement* was written by Winifred Breines. The book explores why a racially integrated women's liberation movement did not develop in the United States. African American author, bell hooks, wrote *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*. The book examines the impact of sexism on black women during slavery, the devaluation of black womanhood, black male sexism, racism among feminists, and the black woman's involvement with feminism. *De Colores Means All of Us: Latina Views for a Multicolored Century (Feminist Classics)* was written by Elizabeth Martinez. In the book, Martínez presents a radical Latina perspective on race, liberation and identity. She wrote the book through the lens of her thirty plus years of experience in the movements for civil rights, women's liberation, and Latina/o empowerment.

Methodology and Vignettes

The interpretive tradition has a long, rich, and diverse history within social science. Some important gains that can be achieved by scholars within the field of social sciences can come from the act of reading literature. Literary study expands our capacity to sympathize with other human beings, enhances our ability to see and imagine human complexity, and broadens our intellectual horizons by enlarging our power to experience life vicariously. Analysis is the practice of looking closely at small parts to see how they affect the whole. Literary analysis focuses on how plot/structure, character, setting, and many other techniques are used by the author to create meaning. It encourages one to think about **how and why** a poem, short story, novel, memoir or play was

written.

This dissertation is a literary analysis as it applies to the writing of memoir. It is a study that focuses on the memoirs of four specific minority women who came of age during the historical time-period in this country known as the Civil Rights Era. Their stories reflect the times in which they were lived out. There are four points that will be the lenses that I will use in conducting the analysis of the four memoirs that are examined in this research study. They are:

1. Purpose—the reason for which something is done.
2. Writing Style—a combination of diction and syntax that includes word choice, word order, sentence construction, organization, use of figurative language and symbolism.
3. Point of View—the perspective from which the story is told.
4. Theme(s)—the main idea or general message of the work, including the truth or believability of the author.

I used several data collection methods as the researcher of this study. The means of data collection I used came in the forms of interview transcripts, storytelling, autobiographical writing, documents such as journal entries and pictures, and audio and video recordings. In a basic linear and chronological approach, this research project encompassed the study of the experiences of four single individuals embracing stories from their lives and exploring the learned significance of those individual experiences. In this study, I created an aggregate of narratives each bearing on the others. It is, by no

means, an exhaustive collection of women's memoir. The significance of this study lies in its contribution towards a practical critique that the writing of memoir has had on certain women of minority status. The following are chronological vignettes of each woman's life.

Coming of Age in Mississippi

Anne Moody

Anne Moody, born Essie Mae, was born into a family of sharecroppers on September 15, 1940. She was born near the town of Centerville, Mississippi. She was the eldest child in her family. She had two siblings, her sister Adline, and her brother Junior. She was raised by her mother. Her father abandoned the family when she was five years old, and he came back into her life randomly throughout her childhood. There are thirty chapters her memoir, and they are grouped into four parts: "Childhood," "High School," "College," and "The Movement." Part one of the story, "Childhood," details the life of Anne from her birth until she turns eighteen years old.[14]

Moody started school at the age of five. The name of the school was Mount Pleasant, which was part of the biggest Baptist church in the area, and it was a school for the Negro children who lived in that area. She had to walk four miles a day to get to and from school. The conditions of the small learning facility were very poor. When Anne was six years old and in the second grade, her mother moved the family into the town of

[14] Anne Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi*: *The Classic Autobiography of Growing Up Poor and Black in the Rural South,* (New York: Doubleday, 1968).

Centerville, Mississippi, in hopes of finding work. This was the first time that Anne lived in the city, and in the same vicinity as white people. She turned seven years old during this time. She went to Willis High, which was the only Negro school in town.

When Anne was eight years old, her mother was working two jobs in the town of Centerville. Anne did well in school and made A's in all subject except mathematics. At nine years old, Anne got her first job. She swept sidewalks and porches and earned $.75 and two gallons of milk a week. This helped to buy food for her family. She worked in the houses of white people for the next five years.

When Anne was fourteen years old, there was a horrible racist incident in Mississippi. An African American boy who was also fourteen years old had been murdered. He was visiting Mississippi from Chicago and whistled at a white woman. Because of this he was lynched. His name was Emmett Till. Anne became terrified of white people for a period of time after this happened.

In 1956, when she was sixteen years old, Anne was reunited with her dad for the first time in eight years. She had gone to visit him, and she moved in with him and his current girlfriend, Emma, because her current stepfather, Raymond, had become sexually interested in her. She finished high school in 1959 at Johnson High School. It was a brand new Negro high school in Woodville, Mississippi. She was eighteen years old.

She received a basketball scholarship to go to Natchez College in Natchez, Mississippi. She was in her second year of college and nineteen years old when she, along with several other students, boycotted the college cafeteria because of their low hygiene

standards. It was her first form of activism. She went to that school for two years and graduated in 1961 with an Associate of Arts degree at the age of twenty-one.

That same year, Moody entered her junior year at Tougalloo College in Jackson, Mississippi. While she was studying there and twenty years old, she also became involved with CORE (Congress of Racial Equality), the SNCC (Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee), and she joined the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People). Civil Rights activist, Medgar Evers, spoke at Tougalloo during that time and Moody met and began to work with him. In 1962, she and her friend Rose refused to sit at the back of a city bus. They were almost attacked, but they were rescued by a black minister. She twenty-two years old at this time and she also became very involved with the SNCC on a voter registration drive.

While she was in college, Moody began to trust white people more, but the continual violence against African Americans in Mississippi had a deep effect on her. Moody graduated from college in the spring of 1963 becoming the first person in her family to earn a college degree. The last week of her senior year she participated in the infamous Wool Worth's lunch counter sit-in. September 15, 1963, was Moody's twenty-third birthday. The date also coincided with the church bombing of an African American church in Birmingham, Alabama. Upon graduating, she traveled to Canton, Mississippi, to start work on The Movement again. While she was there she boarded a Greyhound bus and traveled to Washington, D.C. to testify about the events that had been happening in Mississippi. This was in 1964, and she was still twenty-three years old.

When she was twenty-four years old, and she began working at Cornell University as the Civil Rights Project Coordinator. She had been sent there by the leaders of CORE in Washington, D. C. She was very distraught from all the violence she had endured and witnessed in Mississippi. She was sent there for a change of scenery. She got a job at Cornell University as the Civil Rights Project Coordinator. She worked there for two years. In 1966, she met Austin Strauss and married him on March 9, 1967. She was twenty-six years old. They divorced that same year. She began writing her memoir in 1965, and she finished it in 1967. It was published in 1968, when Moody was twenty-eight years old. And, in 1971, Moody gave birth to her son, Sasha Strauss. She was thirty-one years old.

In 1972, the city of Berlin, Germany, gave Moody a full scholarship to continue her work on civil rights in the United States. They also gave her money, and the use of a fourteen-bedroom house. She and her family moved there and lived on that property for two years, from the ages of thirty-two through thirty-four years old. When the scholarship and work was over, she moved to New York City with her family.

In 1974, Moody visited Mississippi for the first time in eleven years. She went there to visit a friend in prison. In 1975, she published a book of short stories entitled, *Mr. Death*. Then, in 1976 her mother became ill and Moody visited Mississippi again. In the early 1990s, Moody moved back to Mississippi for good. She suffered from dementia during the last few years of her life. Anne Moody died in her home in Gloster, Mississippi, on February 5, 2015.

A Tale of Survival: Memoir of an Hispanic Women

By: Grace Flores- Hughes

Grace Flores-Hughes was born in 1946 in Taft, Texas, a small town not far from the Gulf of Mexico. She was raised by her mother and her maternal grandparents. Her father was out of her life until she was an adult. She was exposed to racism and prejudice for the first time when she started school at six years of age at Zavala Elementary School, which was integrated in 1955. She was put into a special class that was designed for students that were labeled non-English proficient. She was not aware of this at first. She later learned that all of the Mexican children were put into the same class, no matter their age.

When Hughes was eight years old, she learned that her dad was Adan Flores. Her mother had told her that he was dead. But, her maternal grandmother told her the truth. He was alive and had never been married to her mother, and her grandmother told her that she was an illegitimate child. Shortly after learning of his identity, she saw him for the first time when he came to her front door. She was not allowed to talk to him. Her family forbid her from communicating with him in any way.

When Flores-Hughes was nine years old, Emmett Till, a Negro boy from Chicago, was murdered in Mississippi. The news of his death revealed to her that racism was a national problem. Hughes claimed that she had been indoctrinated by the dominant white culture and that she became very aware of her and her family's place in the world

in which they lived by the time she was ten years old. In Taft, Texas, it was common to see signs that read, "Niggers, Wetbacks, and dogs aren't welcome."[15]

Hughes started working when she was twelve years old. She washed dishes at the café where her mother worked as a cook. She also started picking cotton in the summer when she was twelve years old. She worked in the cotton fields every summer until she was eighteen years old. That was a common summer job for the Mexican kids in Taft while Grace was growing up.

In the fall of 1960, when Grace was fourteen years old and in the eighth grade, the Mexican American students started having a little more freedom at school. They were allowed to pick Mexican class favorites for the first time. This was an important step for them. Until then, only white/Anglo students were allowed to participate in any type of school activity. At the age of fifteen, when Hughes enrolled in high school, she was automatically placed into the non-college program. When she was seventeen years old and a junior in high school, she was made aware of this and began to work around the school's racist policies to try and get into a college.

When she was eighteen, Hughes graduated from high school and moved to San Antonio, Texas to attend Durham Business College. She had found out about the school on her own. She applied there and was accepted as a student. The counselors and administrators at her high school did their best to keep her and the other Mexican students from having the opportunity to get a college education.

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[15] Grace Flores Hughes, *A Tale of Survival: Memoir of an Hispanic Woman*, (Bloomington: Author House, 2011), 54.

Grace graduated from the business college when she was twenty and got her first job in civil service at Kelly Airforce Base in San Antonio, Texas. When she was twenty-one years old, she was transferred from the Airforce base in San Antonio to work in the Pentagon in Washington, D. C. She relocated there. In 1972, her grandmother, died. She was twenty-six years old at the time. She met her father formally at her grandmother's funeral.

In 1975, Grace worked in the office of Spanish Surnamed Citizens in Washington, D.C. She helped coin the term Hispanic to help identify United States citizens with Spanish surnames. She also went back to college at the University of the District of Columbia, earning a BS in Child Psychology. She was thirty-one years old. A year later, at the age of thirty-two, she quit her job to attend Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. She graduated with a MA in Public Administration in 1980 when she was thirty-four years old. At that time, she returned to her former job at the Pentagon in Washington, D. C. She also married General Harley Hughes that same year. She had met him many years before they married. She didn't see him for many years but was reconnected with him through her work at the Pentagon. At that time, they became romantically involved.

In 1984, Hughes worked on Ronald Regan's reelection campaign. He appointed her to the office of Community Relations Service at the Department of Justice in 1988. She was the director of the department until 1992. She was forty-six years old when she

received that appointment, and she held it until she was fifty. She called it the appointment from hell because of all the backstabbing that went on behind the scenes.

In the decade between 1992 and 2002, Hughes volunteered in politics and worked on her memoir. She worked in the administration of President George W. Bush from 2002 through 2009. In 2002, she was appointed by President G.W. Bush to serve as a member of the Federal Service Impasses Panel of the Federal Labor Relations Authority. Also, during that time, she was responsible for developing policies and establishing priorities with respect to the resolution of racial and ethnic conflict in communities throughout the country and the resettlement of Cuban/Hispanic refugees in the United States. She was fifty-six years old when she began her time with his administration, and sixty-three years old when President Barak Obama was elected. She did not serve in his administration as she was a Republican. She was sixty-five years old when she published her memoir in 2011. She still lives in Washington D. C. with her husband Harley and their son, Christian.

The Woman Who Watches Over the World

Linda Hogan

Linda Hogan was born July 16, 1947, in Denver, Colorado. Her father was a Chickasaw from a recognized historical family. Her mother was of European/white descent. Her father had a strong influence on her and she grew up relating strongly to both her Chickasaw family in Oklahoma and to a mixed Indian community in the Denver area. Hogan claimed that her foundation in life came from her grandfather's house in Ard-

more, Oklahoma. “All I know is that my life never fully existed in the other, mainstream, America.”[16]

When Hogan was eight years old, her baby brother, Larry, was born. She was very happy when he was born. She felt she finally had someone to love. Hogan drank a great deal as a child, and as a young woman. She turned to alcohol to fill the gaps she felt existed in her life. She also turned to inappropriate relationships for the same reason. In 1959, Hogan was twelve years old and in the sixth grade. She had her first sexual relationship at this time. Her family was living in Germany, and he was a soldier who lived on the same military base. He was twenty-four years old. Her father was in the army and that is why they were living overseas.

When she was fifteen years old, Hogan and her family moved back to the United States. It was 1962, and Hogan got her first job in a nursing home. When she was sixteen, she started working in a dental office and learned to ice skate. She was gaining independence with her jobs. This was a part of her desire to get away from the world of her father and mother.

When she was in her twenties, she married Pat Hogan. She also completed an undergraduate degree at the University of Colorado, in Colorado Springs, when she was in her late twenties. In 1978, she received a master’s degree in English and creative writing from the University of Colorado, Boulder. Her first collection of poetry was published that same year.

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[16] Linda Hogan, *The Woman Who Watches Over the World*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), 21.

In 1979, she adopted two Lakota girls. Hogan was thirty-two years old at the time. She wanted to give them the love and the family that she never had while growing up. She had seen a type of brokenness in them that she had experienced as a young girl. At this same time in her life, she began to have success in her writing career. In 1980, she won The Five Civilized Tribes Award for playwriting. She also received the Young Woman of the Year Award for community service and taught at Colorado College, which is located in Colorado Springs. In 1981, Hogan produced the play, "A Piece of the Moon," at Oklahoma State University.

Hogan relocated to Minneapolis, Minnesota in 1982, and taught at the University of Minnesota there for two years. She was thirty-five when she moved there. She supplemented her income with teaching. In 1983, when she was thirty-six years old, Hogan published *Eclipse*, another book of poetry. She also won the fiction award from "Stand" magazine the same year. During this time, she also taught American Indian Studies and American Studies at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis. This was a way for her to stay connected to the land in Oklahoma. She moved back to Colorado Springs in 1984 and taught at Colorado College again. In 1986, Hogan was awarded both the Pushcart Prize and a National Endowment for the Arts grant. She was thirty-nine years old.

In 1990, Hogan was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for Literature. Also, in 1991 she won the Oklahoma Book Award for Fiction, and she was a Guggenheim Fellow. In 1993 and 1996, Hogan was the recipient of the Colorado Book Award, and in 1998 she

won the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Native Writers Circle of the Americas. She was fifty-one at this time. At this time in her life, she was reaping the rewards from her hard work as a writer.

In 2001, Hogan published her memoir at the age of fifty-four. In the book she chronicled her life in juxtaposition with history from her people, the Chickasaws. In 2002, she won the Writer of the Year Award for Creative Prose for *The Woman Who Watches Over the World.*[17] She won the Mountains and Plains Best Sellers Spirit of the West Literary Achievement Award that same year. Since then, she has been instructing writing workshops and has become the Chickasaw Nation's Writer in Residence. She currently lives in Tishomingo, Oklahoma.

Barefoot Heart: Stories of a Migrant Child

By: Elva Trevino Hart

Elva Trevino Hart was born in 1949, in Pearsall, Texas, which is located fifty-five miles south east of San Antonio, Texas. She was sixth child and final child born into a family of poor sharecroppers. She was a Mexican American and her family worked for a white farmer. She lived her first two years with her family in a one-bedroom rancho that was located on his farm. When she was two years old, her family had to move in with her uncle in his two-bedroom house because they had lost the use of the rancho. This was in 1951. The family lived there for two years.[18]

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[17] Ibid.

[18] Elva Trevino Hart, *Barefoot Heart: Stories of a Migrant Child*, (Tempe: Bilingual Press, 1999).

In the spring of 1953, Hart's family went on the migrant circuit for the first time because the family needed the money. They traveled to Minnesota to work in the beet fields. At this time, Hart was four years old. She was taken in and cared for by Catholic nuns at the local parish for the three months that her family worked in the fields in Minnesota. After their work was finished in Minnesota, they drove to Wisconsin to pick beans. They would always arrive home in September so that Hart's siblings could go to school. Having each of his children graduate from high school was one of her father's goals.

Hart had her first and only birthday party when she turned six years old. Her family was able to afford to pay for the small affair out of the funds they received from working the migrant circuit. Hart felt guilty that they spent money on her when they were always in need for the essential things in life. Hart also started school when she was six years old. It was 1955, and she attended Westside School. It was the school that the Mexican children attended. The schools in Pearsall, Texas were still segregated at that time. *The Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court ruling had no effect in Taft, Texas. Hart also met a story teller named "La Morenita," when she was six years old. Their relationship sparked her love of stories.

In 1956, when Hart was seven years old, the family became temporarily homeless and had to live in a one room storage shed. This was a traumatic event in Hart's life. Her father and brothers built them a small two room house at that time. Her family

moved into their first home that same year. She felt much safer in their new home but disliked that there was no indoor plumbing. Her family still had to use an outhouse.

Hart turned nine years old in 1958. She was in the fourth grade and had her hair cut for the first time in her life that year. She thought she had outgrown her braids. Her sister cut her hair off at the top of each of her two braids. She did not like the results of the haircut and felt insecure without her long hair at first. Hart also started playing the flute in the school band at that time. When she was in the fifth grade, the schools in Pearsall became integrated, and her sisters began to start getting married and leaving home.

In 1961, the first public library opened in Pearsall, Texas. Hart was twelve years old and in the sixth grade and she was delighted. She started checking out books and reading voraciously. It was a way for her to escape her life in Pearsall. Hart remarked that this experience started her thinking about going to college. She also traveled alone for the first time the summer after her sixth-grade year. She went to New York City to visit a sister who had married and moved there with her husband. This was the year that her family stopped traveling the migrant circuit. Her father quit working and started drawing social security.

When Hart was thirteen years old and in the seventh grade, she won first place in the science fair at her school. She began to realize that her abilities with math and science could enable her to go to college. Her first day of freshman English, Hart had to write a story. This assignment ignited her love of writing. She was fifteen years old. She ex-

celled in all of her subjects her first year in high school, so she made the decision that year to do what she had to in order to go to college. In 1965, when she was sixteen years old, Hart got a job in New York City working as a clerk for Dun & Bradstreet. She was staying with her sister for the summer. They offered her a fulltime job as soon as she graduated from high school. She turned it down. She told them she was going to go to college, even though she did not know how she would accomplish that goal.

When she was seventeen years old, Hart went to Mexico for the first time. She accompanied her dad on the trip. She remarked on how different he was there, full of confidence and joy. When he came back home, he turned back into a somewhat abject Mexican American man. Hart graduated from high school in 1967. She was eighteen years old and was the Valedictorian of her high school class. She attended the University of Texas in Austin that fall with the help of some friends who helped her fill out the proper paper work. The school counselors and administrators at her high school refused to help her and other Mexican students who wanted to go to college. She graduated from college in 1971, at the age of twenty-two. At that time, she took a job for Control Data Corporation. She moved to Sunnyvale, California to work for that company. She worked there for two years. She then applied to Stanford University and was accepted into the computer science Ph.D. program with a full fellowship. Two years later, Hart quit with a master's degree and went to work for IBM. She could not handle more schooling and student loan debt, so she decided not to pursue a Ph.D. She worked in sales for several years. In 1982, when she was thirty-two years old, she decided to scale

down her sales territories, which included Texas, Louisiana, and Oklahoma, in order to write stories.

Hart also started writing stories from her childhood at this time. She was working on her genealogy as a hobby and began interviewing her family members to get their stories. She would then write them down in a journal, and from there she began writing stories. Hart began to read them at public speaking engagements while she continued to work at IBM. She worked at IBM for seventeen years, from 1978 until 1995. She was twenty-nine years old when she started working there, and she was forty-six years old when she quit that job to write full time.

Hart's memoir began as a series of stories she wrote about different childhood experiences. She used them to writer her book and published her memoir in 1999. She was fifty years old when her book was published. Hart is sixty-eight years old now and lives in Virginia with her husband Louis W. Hart, Jr. She continues to write and accept public speaking engagements regarding her book.

Analysis

Purpose

Anne Moody's 1968 *Coming of Age in* Mississippi covers her life from early childhood through early adulthood, culminating with her work in the Civil Rights Movement and her graduation from college.[19] She saw her purpose for writing the book as a form of activism that she continued after her graduation from college: "In the beginning I never really saw myself as a writer…I was first and foremost an activist in the civil rights movement in Mississippi."[20]

Grace Flores Hughes wrote *A Tale of Survival,* and explained a two-fold purpose: "This book is not intended for one group of people or one particular type of person; it is for anyone that wants to take a moment to reminisce about the lives they left behind while at the same time it is meant to inspire."[21] Hughes also wanted to tell the truth about the deep seeded racism that she endured while she was growing up. She was

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[19] For the word <Negroe> this is how Moody spelled it throughout her book.

[20]Margalit Fox, "Ann Moody, Author of 'Coming of Age in Mississippi,' Dies at 74," *New York Times*, (2015): url: https://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/18/books/anne-moody-author-of-coming-of-age-in-mississippi-dies-at-74.html.

[21]Grace Flores-Hughes, *A Tale of Survival: Memoir of an Hispanic Woman,* (Bloomington: Author House, 2011), c xx.

successful in accomplishing these goals. Armagrande, her grandmother, is a major figure in Hughes's life. In her memoir she reminisces about her experiences with her:

> Amagrande and I ate among Taft's wealthiest ranchers and businessmen along the counter at Johnsons'café. The counter seats were too high and uncomfortable, but Amagrande preferred them over booths. She liked to sit among the men, perched on one of the rotating seats drinking coffee, which she did in a most unusual way. Dressed in her *luto*, Amagrande poured her coffee out of the cup and onto the saucer. She made loud slurping sounds, prompting everyone in the café to stop what they were doing to stare. Amagrande set the saucer down long enough to take deep drags from her hand-rolled Bugler cigarette. She was the only woman at the counter who smoked cigarettes, the only one who drank coffee from a saucer, and the only one dressed like she was from another planet. (53)

She also inspires by giving the reader insight into those experiences that were implanted into her mind:

> As my Ama's car rolled further out of Taft, the portrait of white cotton and bluebonnets stuck in my mind as we moved away, and Taft receded from sight. The cotton gin, the tallest building in town stood imperially among stacks of cotton bales. The cotton fields were naked of plants; only debris lay scattered about. Cotton season was over, and so was my life in Taft. Holding back tears, I took a long sigh and thanked God that I was able to leave Taft in one piece, and with my sanity still intact. (193)

Linda Hogan wrote *The Woman Who Watches Over the World.* Published in 2001, Hogan's memoir recounts her search and successful uncovering of her American Indian identity, through her difficult childhood, along with stories of her people, the Chickasaws. Hogan's purpose for writing shifted as she began writing the book: "I sat down to write about pain and wrote, instead, about healing, history and survival." While Hogan added that it is not easy for a Native American woman to talk about herself, she

pointed out that it is human nature to want truth. "Humans want truth the way water desires to be sea level and moves across the continent for the greater ocean."[22]

Her journey in writing this memoir all began when she spotted the clay woman in a museum shop:

> I remember the first time I saw the clay woman….The clay woman from San Martin, Mexico, was full and beautiful. Attached to the earth, she flew over it….Her name was written on a tag, "The Bruja Who Watches Over the Earth." Bruja is the Spanish word for a woman healer, soothsayer, or sometimes witch. I loved this flying soothsayer who protected the lands beneath her…I bought the clay woman and asked the clerk to mail her to me, then I returned home, anticipating the day The Woman Who Watches Over the World would appear. When she arrived, she wasn't whole….The woman who watches over the world was broken….At first I was disappointed, but then I thought, Yes, the woman who watches over us is as broken as the land, as hurt as the flesh of people. She is a true representation of the world she flies above. Something between us and earth is broken. (17-8)

She wrote to illuminate the connection between the earth and those who are living on it. The planet and its inhabitants are both broken. For healing to take place, a symbiosis of the two must occur. "Our healing, we both knew, was connected to this other healing, as woman to land, as bird to water. We are together in this, all of us, and it's our job to love each other, human, animal, and land, the way the ocean loves the shore, and shore loves and needs the ocean, even if they are different elements."[23]

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[22] Linda Hogan, *The Woman Who Watches Over the World,* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2001), 15-6.

[23]Ibid. 29.

Elva Trevino Hart wrote *Barefoot Hart: Stories of a Migrant Child*. Published is 1999, the memoir is an account of the successful life of a Mexican American woman who grew up in a family of migrant farm workers. She worked hard to graduate from college and become a successful computer programmer. Hart's purpose in writing was to reconnect with her childhood self. "In my low moments I wondered what I was doing. In the silence, pure and simple, the answer came: I needed to integrate my childhood Mexican side back into myself."[24]

Imagery from her childhood brings these moments to life:

> When my father was a sharecropper at the McKinley farm, we had a cow. This is where all the milk and butter for the family came from. It was never enough. The cow was kept in a fenced-in pasture. All the kids took turns going to get it in the late afternoon to be milked. All the others would wait for it to be brought in and then follow my father, like chicks after the hen, to the barn. Each of the kids had a cup. Apa let them have the warm foam from the top of the milk bucket. It was all air and bubbles, but to them it was a daily treat. (69)

> We never went to restaurants, ever since they had told my father that Mexicans had to use the kitchen door—only gringos got to go in the front door. The closest my father had ever gotten to a waitress was the barmaids at the cantinas. Everyone knew what they did after work. No, we couldn't be waitresses either; it was better to have your daughters next to you in the fields, covered with pants, a work shirt, and a hat, where you could protect them. (28)

Writing Style

Organization: Moody's *Coming of Age in Mississippi* is a detailed, chronological narrative.[25] It contains thirty chapters that she divided into four parts: Childhood, High

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[24]Elva Trevino Hart, *Barefoot Heart: Stories of a Migrant Child*, (Tempe: Bilingual Press, 1999), 235.

[25] Anne Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi: The Classic Autobiography of Growing Up Poor in the Rural Black South,* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1968), 11.

School, College, and The Movement. Every section of the book is demarcated by a black box. They are similar to a coffin in shape and form. These funereal black boxes can be seen as a metaphor for the bitter life of confinement and oppression that Moody and other African Americans endured in their lives as they awoke to a day of working in the fields and returned home for food and sleep every day except Sunday. She highlighted this in this quote:

> Mama and Daddy had two girls. I was almost four and Adline was a crying baby about six or seven months. We rarely saw Mama and Daddy, because they were in the field every day except Sunday. They would get up early in the morning and leave the house just before daylight. It was six o'clock in the evening when they returned, just before dark. (11)

At a certain age the girls joined them in the summer, taking time out for school in fall, winter, and spring.

Hughes' *A Tale of Survival* contains seventeen chapters and an epilogue. Each chapter is marked with an epigraph that expands on its title. For example, the title of chapter one is, "In the beginning….Blackland." The epigraph reads, "My advice to those who are about to begin, in earnest, the journey of life, is to take their heart in one hand and a club in the other."[26] It was a quote from Josh Billings. He was an American humorist. In chapter eight, "Mi Casa, Tu Casa," Hughes uses a quote from American author and educator, Henry Van Dyke. "Every house where love abides, and friendship is a guest, is surely home, and home sweet home for there the heart can rest."[27]

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[26]Grace Flores-Hughes, *A Tale of Survival: Memoir of an Hispanic Woman,* (Bloomington: Author House, 2011), 1.

[27] Ibid. 117.

Hogan's *The Woman Who Watches Over the World* has eleven chapters. It is not in chronological order. Along with the telling of her own life story, Hogan weaves some of the history of her people, the Chickasaws, into the tapestry of the life narrative she writes. She starts this dialogue with her reader by recanting what happened at the Sand Creek Massacre when Hogan tells us that the terrors of that moment in time are still alive and present in her and her people.[28]

Hogan views that event as a turning point in Native American's lives and history. She remarks that even now, there is no way to escape from the pain and trauma of the events of that day. And in her own life the account came true: "And the distance of this history still reverberates, entering into this and every day. We are never not Indians. We have never forgotten this history."[29]

Elva Trevino Hart wrote *Barefoot Hart* has twenty-one chapters and is divided into three parts: Migrant Workers, Father Migrations, and Returnings: Part One and Part Two of the book are written in chronological order. Part Three of the book jumps forward to 1993, when she revisits the migrant circuit with her grown son. She continues to go forward and back in time for the continuation of the book. The chapter and section pages are adorned with Mexican dichos, which are wise sayings. For example, Part One of *Barefoot Heart, "*Migrant Workers," begins with this dicho: "Though you may

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[28] The Sand Creek Massacre occurred during the American Indian wars that occurred on November 29, 1864. Peaceful Southern Cheyenne and Arapahoe Indians were massacred by a band of Colonel John Chivington's Colorado volunteers at Sand Creek, Colorado. They killed and mutilated an estimated 70-163 Native Americans that day, including women and children.

[29] Linda Hogan, *The Woman Who Watches Over the World,* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2001). 59.

be wealthy and tall, you will still need the poor and the small."[30] The dichos serve as a motif that this is a Mexican story, reflecting Hart's Mexican roots that have become so important to her.

Tone and Use of Language

The tone of Moody's story is poignant and grim. It is indicative of the harsh conditions in which she lived much of her life, especially in the beginning when African Americans commonly worked in the fields as sharecroppers for white land owners. Moody referred to these men as "Mr. Charlie,"[31] which is a metaphor for the white men who owned the plantations in the rural south. Anne's parents were sharecroppers who worked for a Mr. Charlie. It was a traditional role for the poor whites and freed Negros who lived in that part of the country, and one that continually reminded them of their place in society:

> Most evenings, after the [Negroes] had come from the fields, washed, and eaten, they would sit on their porches and look up toward Mr. Carter's house and talk. Sometimes Mama told me stories about what was going on in that big white house. She would point out all the brightly lit rooms, saying that Old Lady Carter was baking tea cakes in the kitchen…and Mr. Carter was sitting up counting all the money he made off Negros. (13)

Part one of Moody's story, "Childhood," sets the tone of her memoir and details the impoverished existence of Anne and her family during this time. Her parents worked in the fields from dawn until dusk every day except Sunday. Her mother, whose name was

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[30] Elva Trevino Hart, *Barefoot Heart: Stories of a Migrant Child.* (Tempe: Bilingual Press, 1999). 1.

[31] Anne Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi: The Classic Autobiography of Growing Up Poor in the Rural Black South,* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1968), 287.

Toosweet, had a younger brother named George Lee who was assigned the task of keeping Anne and her younger siblings during the day. He resented this so much that he beat Anne, because he wanted to be playing and exploring out in the woods:

> One day he said, 'I'm going hunting.' I could tell he meant to go by himself. I was scared he was going to leave us alone, but I didn't say anything. I never said anything to him when he was in that mood. 'You heard me!' he said shaking me. I still didn't say anything. Wap! He hit me hard against the head. (12)

These actions by her cousin set a tone that foreshadowed turbulent events later in her life.

Coming of Age in Mississippi is written in the raw vernacular of Moody's childhood. The dialect was very common among the impoverished and racially oppressed African Americans in Mississippi during that time.[32] A good example of this idiomatic language is noted in a conversation a young Anne has with her mother:

> "Where is Daddy going?" I cried to Mama.
>
> "By his business," she answered.
>
> "That dog! That no-good dog!" I heard her mumble.
>
> "Ain't he gonna stay with us?" I asked.
>
> "No he ain't gonna stay with us! Shut up!" She yelled at me with eyes full of water.[33]

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[32] Frank Northen Magill, "Coming of Age in Mississippi-Form and Content," *eNotes.com*, last modified May 7, 2017, https://www.enotes.com/search?q=coming+of+age+in+mississippi;

[33] Anne Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi: The Classic Autobiography of Growing Up Poor in the Rural Black South,* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1968), 19.

Another example of this type of language is from a conversation she had with a classmate, Doris, upon returning to her home town of Centreville after she spent the summer working in Baton Rouge:

> "Moody, where you been? You certainly disappeared some fast after school. Someone said you were in New Orleans."
>
> "I went to Baton Rouge and lived with Ed and got a job. What's been going on here?" I asked her.
>
> "Nothing, really. They ran Benty and Mrs. Rosetta them out of town," she said.
>
> "For what?" I asked.
>
> "They claim Benty was screwing that poor little white girl who live down in that bottom," she said.
>
> "The girl living in that bottom where that white woman with them three children lived?" I asked her.
>
> "What white woman with three children?" she asked.
>
> "The one Mr. Banks was supposed to be taking care of…"
>
> "Yes, that's the girl. The one living next to where that woman lived," Doris said.[34]

Another example comes from the end of the book. It is a conversation she had with herself on the first day of the freedom vote she and her piers had been working so hard to get established.[35] Her lexicon has become more sophisticated towards the end of the book. It reflects a young woman who is in college and becoming educated:

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[34] Ibid. 143.

[35] In 1964, civil rights organizations including the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE) and Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) organized a voter registration drive, known as the Mississippi Summer Project, or Freedom Summer, aimed at dramatically increasing voter registration in Mississippi. "Freedom Summer," *History.com*, last modified September 21, 2017, http://www.history.com/topics/black-history/freedom-summer.

> I knew it from the beginning. Until we can come up with some good sound plans to help the Negroes solve their immediate problems—that is, a way to get a little food into their bellies, a roof over their heads, and a few coins in their pockets—we will be talking forever. They will never stop being scared of Mr. Charlie until we are able to replace the crumbs that Mr. Charlie is giving them.[36] Until we can say, 'Here is a job, Sam. Work hard and stand up to be a man.' Not until we can do that or find some way for Sam to do that, will Sam stand up. If we don't, Sam will forever be a boy, and uncle, or just plain Sam, the receipt of crumbs. (341)

Grace Flores-Hughes's life with a tone that is bleak and fitting for the life she had experienced. *A Tale of Survival* was written in a prose that is a mix of English and Spanish. Flores-Hughes describes it as Spanglish. It is a hybrid language that her family spoke at home, by the combining of both languages. For example: "It was interesting to hear Spanish and English intermixed so fluidly in conversation, but it was in this way that I, and most Mexicans in Taft, learned to speak; the mixture of Spanish and English—Spanglish, represents the necessity to learn the English language, and the reliance on our native Spanish to help us through that transition."[37]

One example of Spanglish came in the form of a question that a young Hughes asked her grandfather, Buelito. "Buelito es verdad que Taft estuvo cubierto por agua?" She had heard an old Taft legend that the town had been covered by water in the past. He spoke in Spanglish too when he answered her question. "Si, es possible."[38] Another

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[36] Mr. Charlie is a metaphor for the elite white class of people in Mississippi. The term symbolizes the men who used to own plantations and who utilized slave labor.

[37] Grace Flores-Hughes, *A Tale of Survival: Memoir of an Hispanic Woman,* (Bloomington: Author House, 2011), 3.

[38] Ibid. 3.

example of Spanglish came later in the book. *La double lip* was a name Hughes family used to describe a local waitress. She was the aunt of a boy who hated Hughes and her family for the simple fact that they were Mexican:

> I discovered the boy wasn't the only one to direct hate toward our family. His aunt worked behind the counter of the Taft Drug Store and was known as *la double lip* because she applied her lipstick above her lip line to make her lips look plump. After school I stopped at the drug store along with other classmates to order ice cream cones, but *la double lip* waited on everyone except me. *La double lip* ignored me so many times that I ended up having to ask my friends to order a banana nut ice cream cone without her knowing it was for me. (131)

Hughes spoke of the hopelessness she felt as a child called a "bastarda." However, it was salvaged by a sense of what she needed to do in order to get out of the situation:

> It's possible that this burden and the first inklings of the rabid abuse within *el barrio* of Mexican-on-Mexican inside the family as well as outside began the germination of the idea that I would leave….So that's how it all started for me, and endless search of who I was and why I was here and how I would make a life for myself different from that available in *el Barrio.* (1)

Hughes, who changed her name from Graciela to Grace, wrote the narrative in English mixed with Spanish phrases, symbolizing her position in the culture into which she was born: a society that was dominated by the privilege of the white people who marginalized Mexican people, their language, and their culture. Stories of Mexican inferiority and brutality led her to have the belief that light skinned people of European descent were better than she was. This belief eventually led her to work harder and push herself to extremes sometimes: "I spent every waking hour at the Pentagon and didn't

so much as have a thought that anyone noticed the long hours I worked, never mind the enormous stress I endured."[39]

By the end of her memoir, Hughes's tone changes from one of a victim to one of status, as she took on a role of prominence in the government of the United States. She was appointed as the Community Relations Director at the Department of Justice under President Regan:

> During the Hispanic heritage ceremony, I stood alongside President Reagan and Vice President Bush and some other key members of the administration. As I faced the rolling television cameras and heard President Reagan announce his intent to nominate me, I thought about my days in Taft. I thought about my school friends who had influenced my life and I thought about my friends from West Pecan Street who also influenced my life, in yet another way. But mostly I thought about how proud Amagrande would have been to see me on stage with the head of *el gobierno* of the United States that she so proudly hailed yet feared. I realized the position to which I was being nominated by President Reagan wasn't the end of all political appointments. But having reached the assistant attorney general level after starting as a GS-2, was for me the pinnacle of success. (263)

Hughes drew her memoir to an end by highlighting the hardship that went along with the political appointment that she called the pinnacle of her success:

> CRS was becoming the appointment from hell. I was called more than once by the Democratic staff of the Judiciary Committee for interviews about my qualifications. It seemed they were listening to my detractors from CRS. It was becoming clearer and clearer by the day that the deputy at CRS wanted my job and was doing all he could to derail my nomination….I figured in their own tacit way they were supporting the deputy and in essence purposely fueling the flames of his acrimonious actions and those of his two cronies against my nomination. (264)

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[39] Ibid. 217.

Linda Hogan's memoir, *The Woman Who Watches Over the World,* is a book that was a search for truth. She begins her story with this epigraph written in her own words: "I come from warriors…yet I can hardly speak….That's why I write this."[40] Her Story was told through tones of peaceful acceptance sprinkled with melancholy that reveals her poetic nature:

> 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 mother's hands, a child so disturbed as to have had 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. Now, years later, I realize that it is easier to survive financial hardship than emotional poverty. (43-4)

Throughout the narrative the tone also conveyed tones of purposefulness and acceptance. Hogan used her gift with words in a purposeful way to reveal their importance in her life:

> Words, I see now, are the defining shape of a human spirit. Without them, we fall. Without them, there is no accounting for the human place in the world. Language is an intimacy not only with others, but even with the self. It creates a person. Without it, in the dawn, in the dark of night, there is no way to know who or what we are. One day the words came. I was an adult. I went to school after work. I read. I wrote. Words came, anchored to the earth, to matter, to the wholeness of nature. There was, in this, a fall this time to a holy ground of a different order, a present magic, a light bearing, soul saving presence that illuminated my heart and mind and altered my destiny. Without it, who would guess what, as a human being, I would have become. (56-7)

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[40] Linda Hogan, *The Woman Who Watches Over the World,* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2001), 8.

Her book was also embedded with a tone of acceptance. This is best illustrated with a quote from a passage in which she described her acceptance of her ethnical identity:

> For myself, being one of those people who survived, my tribal identity has always been chasing after me, to keep its claims on my body and heart. I can't escape and be whole and real. As if I am the lung and it is the air breathing me in and out like the waves of the ocean, rhythms and cycles of wind. It is the blood; I'm just the container. It is the ocean. It carries me and I float. It is something Native people can never explain to those who do not know it, and I have given up trying. (27)

Hogan used the experience of finding a clay doll in a museum shop in Mexico to highlight a theme in her book:

> I remember the first time I saw the clay woman. I was with Georgianna Sanchez. We were in a museum gift shop. The clay woman from San Martin Mexico, was full and beautiful. Attached to earth, she flew over it…Her name was written on a tag, "The Bruja Who Watches Over the Earth…I loved this flying soothsayer who protected the lands beneath her. She was connected to them by her very body, the very same clay. Like nearly all first people, she was shaped from the planet to which she was connected."[41]

When the figurine arrived, it was broken, which was symbolic to Hogan:

> When she arrived, she wasn't whole. Her legs were broken off, the gray interior clay exposed beneath the paint. I glued them back on. Then she began to fall apart in other ways. Her nose broke. Soon one of her hands fell off. The woman who watches over the world was broken. Despite my efforts, she remained that way, fragmented and unhealed. Something between us and earth has broken. That is what the soothsayer says. (18)

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[41] Ibid. 17.

Hogan's world had been broken and full of pain since her childhood. It had been similar to that of her people before she was born. The brokenness of the *Woman Who Watches Over the World* stood parallel alongside the reality of Hogan's existence. No matter how hard she tried to put herself back together, she was never able to achieve it.

This book is allegorical in nature. The text attempts to suture the wounded fragments of her life together with both the pain and wholeness of her people, the Chickasaws. She shows how historical and emotional pain is passed down through generations. In the narrative, Hogan locates herself within a greater context of brokenness from the physical world, the world of family, friends, direct and indirect ancestors in the legacy of a difficult and brutal American history, and in her struggles trying to live in mainstream American society: "All I know is that my life never fully existed in the other, mainstream, America." Like other Native American people, she felt very connected to the land. And stories were also very important to her. She quotes Kiowa writer, N. Scott Momady, who said "We are made of words."[42]

Hogan is a novelist and poet. Her writing style is fluid and easily shifts from a vernacular prose into a floating poetic style of writing. She uses figurative language and imagery to make many of her points throughout the story: "We humans have always thought we had greater powers than we had. And with such little protection beneath our shelters of wood and shingle-thin roofs, the belief systems have failed us because belief

[42] Ibid. 21.

alone does not save us in a world of matter. Yet we do have the power of our talking, our stories."[43]

Although the book, *Barefoot Heart,* is written mostly in English, the author began writing her memoir in Spanish. It was the first language that she learned. Eventually, she used a type of Spanglish before translating it into English.

The tone of Elva Trevino Hart's memoir is doleful, while at the same time hopeful and sympathetic towards her situation and others who are living in similar circumstances. Her family was very poor, and her father worked in the fields during the summer months as a migrant worker. Regarding this time in her life, she says:

> I am nobody. And my story is the same as a million others. Poor Mexican American. Female child. We all look alike: dirty feet, brown skin, downcast eyes. You have seen us if you have driven through south Texas on the way to Mexico. We are there-walking barefoot by the side of the road. During harvest time there are fewer of us-we are with our families in the fields. (1)

The family traveled to Minnesota when she was a little girl so that they could be part of the migrant circuit, which was a route that many Mexican Americans took annually to make money to support their families. Her tone reflects the panic and fear of growing up in a family that was poor and constantly on the move, in order to make a living:

> In the spring of 1953 Apa interrupted our family life at Tio Alfredo's to take us to work in the beet fields of Minnesota. Since we had no car, we went in a troca encamisada (which means a jacketed exchange) with another family. The back of this huge truck was covered with dark red canvas. It looked like a tent sitting on the flatbed, except the sides were reinforced with wood. The man who

[43] Ibid. 16.

> owned the truck was nicknamed "El Indio" because his skin, like that of an Indian, was the same color as the canvas, a dark, strong red. I thought he must be very rich to own a huge truck like that. We, on the other hand, owned no car, no house, almost nothing. (4)

This practice was especially hard on Hart's mother, who was in charge of caring for her six children: "My mother was frantic. She was going to the other end of the world with six children and no way to get back for four or five months."[44] Hart's inclusion of her helpless situation illuminated her lack of voice and stature in the culture in which she lived. Hart's concern for people who still live similar lives is obvious. She remarks in her memoir:

> It may seem that the life I tell about happened long ago. But for some people it may still be happening in very much the same way. Stories in the newspaper tell about Mexican migrants in South Carolina, Mexican American migrants in California, African American migrants in Florida, and Native American migrants in the Midwest. If you eat a fruit or vegetable that is fragile like strawberries or grapes, it is a safe bet that it went through a migrant worker's hands on its way to your mouth. The migrant worker usually only has work in good weather, gets paid by the piece instead of the hour, and makes less than minimum wage. (211)

Point of View

Written in the first person, Moody narrates her life story by telling readers that she is still frequented by the ghosts of her past. "I'm still haunted by dreams of the time we lived on Mr. Carter's plantation. Lots of Negros lived on his place. Like Mama and Daddy, they were all farmers. We all lived in rotten two room shacks."[45] Her point of

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[44] Elva Trevino Hart, *Barefoot Heart: Stories of a Migrant Child.* (Tempe: Bilingual Press, 1999), 5.

[45] Anne Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi: The Classic Autobiography of Growing Up Poor in the Rural Black South,* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1968), 11.

view for the first two parts of the book, Childhood and High School starts with the outlook of a child who is timid and mistreated by people in the dominant white culture, to the viewpoint of a teenager who is timorous due to events she sees spinning out of control:

> Not only did I enter high school with a new name, but also with a completely new insight into the life of Negroes in Mississippi. I was now working for the meanest white woman in town, and a week before school started Emmett Till was killed. Up until his death, I had heard of Negroes found floating in a river or dead somewhere with their bodies riddled with bullets. But I didn't know the mystery behind these killings then. I remember once when I was only seven I heard Mama and one of my aunts talking about some Negro who had been beaten to death. "Just like them lowdown skunks killed him they will do the same to us," Mama had said. When I asked her who killed the man and why, she said, "An Evil Spirit killed him. You gotta be a good girl or it will kill you too." So, since I was seven, I had lived in fear of that "Evil Spirit." It took me eight years to learn what that spirit was. (121)

Not long after Emmett Till was murdered she heard about the NAACP. Her white employer was discussing the organization with a group of her with friends. When she finished work for the evening, she walked home a little quicker than normal. (She had been doing that ever since Till's murder.) After she arrived home, she asked her mother what it meant, but to her dismay her mother refused to discuss it with her. Moody had a teacher whom she could trust named Mrs. Rice and the next day at school she asked her about it. Rice put her off at the time, but later on she explained to her the meaning of the acronym and the affiliation behind it:

> About a week later, Mrs. Rice had me over for Sunday dinner and I spent about five hours with her. Within that time, I digested a good meal and accumulated a whole new pool of knowledge about Negroes being butchered and slaughtered

> by whites in the South. After Mrs. Rice had told me all this, I felt like the lowest animal on earth. At least when other animals (hogs, cows, etc.) were killed by man, there were used as food. But when man was butchered or killed by man, in the case of Negroes by whites, they were left lying on a road or found floating in a river or something. (127-8)

This conversation did more than just inform Moody about the meaning of the NAACP; it ignited a spark of excitement and hope but in the meantime, fear was still part of her reality and for more protection she moved in with her father for her senior year. A few years later, when she was in college her roommate and friend, Trotter, was the secretary of the campus chapter. She encouraged her to become a member. Moody was interested but challenged by the invitation at the same time:

> I promised her that I would go to the next meeting. All that night I didn't sleep. Everything started coming back to me. I thought of Samuel O'Quinn. I thought of how he had been shot in the back with a shotgun because they suspected him of being a member. I thought of Reverend Dupree and his family who had been run out of Woodville when I was a senior in high school, and all he had done was to get up and mention NAACP in a sermon. The more I remembered the killings, beatings, and intimidations, the more I worried what might possibly happen to me or my family if I joined the NAACP. But I knew I was going to join, anyway. I had wanted to for a long time. (248)

After she joined the NAACP, Moody's point of view continued to be hopeful that it would bring some positive changes for African Americans:

> Within minutes the police cars were completely surrounded, blocked in from every direction. There were two cops in the front seat of each car. They looked frightened to death of us. When the students <who had been arrested for participating in a demonstration> got out of the cars, they were hugged, kissed, and congratulated for well over an hour. All during this time the cops remained in their seats behind locked doors. Finally, someone started singing "We Shall Overcome," and everyone joined in. When we finished singing, someone sug-

> gested we go to the football stadium and have a big rally. In minutes every student was on the football field singing all kinds of freedom songs, giving testimonies as to what we were going to do, and praying and carrying on something terrible. (249-50)

As she was finishing up her college years and preparing to graduate, Moody's point of view sours. The movement was stalling and was not delivering on the changes they promised. She was feeling alone and demoralized at her college graduation ceremony:

> I didn't realize that the audience consisted of parents of the graduates until the minister delivering the sermon addressed them. "Yes, parents," I thought. And then I realized that not a single member of my family was present. Adline and Junior has said that they would come, but they hadn't. "Here I am," I thought, "alone, all alone as I have been for a long time." Then I had the feeling that now that I was out of college and couldn't go home, I would be even more alone than in the past. Graduating, I thought, and I had no idea of where I was going or how I would get there. The only thing I knew was what I would have to face as a Negro trying. (377)

The end of Moody's memoir finds her getting on a bus heading to Washington, D. C. on route to a political demonstration. The people on the bus are singing "We Shall Overcome." Listening to the singing, she ends her narrative with these words, "I wonder. I really wonder."

From other sources we know how disappointed and disillusioned she became with the Civil Rights Movement.[46] In an interview towards the end of her life, Moody discussed the toll that her work in the movement took on her. "You don't know the effect that it has on you mentally. It wears; it tears at the root of your heart."[47] After spending

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[46] Ibid. 384.

[47] Anne Moody, interview by Debra Spencer, *Oral History Project 403*, AU76, April 15, 2017.

most of her adult life working for civil rights, Moody became disenchanted with the movement: "I came to see through my writing that no matter how hard we in the movement worked, nothing seemed to change." She added, "We were like an angry dog on a leash that had turned on its master. It could bark and howl and snap, and sometimes even bite, but the master was always in control."[48]

Writing in the first person, Grace Flores-Hughes's as narrator of her memoir and begins her memoir with these words: "From the beginning, I thought my name was *bastarda.* That name seemed to carry a negative connotation but to me it was my name."[49] Hughes grew up feeling that she was inferior and irregular. When she got older and started school, she said that her name changed to *wetback*.

Hughes viewed her life as a child and teenager through a lens of confusion and fear. The racist mythology of the dominant white culture took root in her during her early years in school and stayed with her as she matriculated through her education in Taft, Texas. Racism was deeply embedded within Anglos and their institutions in her small town[50]. She writes:

> Taft Baptists captured my attention because the Baptist church sat next to the only town park I longed to play in. Every day on my way to the school, I saw the same two swarthy Mexican men cleaning the park; one pushed a lawnmower, while the other followed behind to trim the edges and gather litter and debris. After school, I would usually stop with a few of my classmates to enjoy pecans

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[48]Margalit Fox, "Anne Moody, Author of 'Coming of Age in Mississippi,' Dies at 74," *New York Times*, February 17, 2015.

[49] Grace Flores-Hughes, *A Tale of Survival: Memoir of an Hispanic Woman,* (Bloomington: Author House, 2011), 1.

[50] Hughes used the word "Anglos" in her memoir.

> off the ground, in the shade of the trees that bore them. We chased after squirrels to keep them from taking all of the nuts and roared with laughter as we watched them climb the trees to get away from us. But when we tried to use the jungle gym or the swings the Anglos who lived across from the park rushed out of their homes to chase us away. "Shoo! Shoo! Get out of here you dirty little Mexicans," they ordered. We hurriedly left the park and ran toward Green Avenue. Like militia, the mostly older Anglos would watch over us until we disappeared into the downtown district; this continued throughout my elementary school years until I gave up trying to enter the park. (15)

The Baptist minister told Hughes and her friends on several occasions to get out of the park. They were dirty Mexicans to him as well. Hughes was confused and puzzled by the lack of resistance she saw within her community of Mexicans. It had an impact on the way that she saw herself and her people when she was a young girl and woman:

> I often wondered why residents of the South Side, including my own family members, never stood up against their oppressors. Ama explained that she, and many others on the South Side worked as maids and farmhands to the wealthy landowners who ran the town, and they needed to keep their employers happy if they wanted to feed their families; trouble makers would be fired on the spot and immediately replaced by the next in a long line of eager-to-work Mexican-Americans. (48)

Below is her account of the first time she had ever been in an "Anglo's" house. It was a painful experience for her:

> I went to my classmate Maggie's house to rehearse for our junior-senior prom skit. I was thrilled to be going to Maggie's house. I had been fascinated with the split-level brick home with the family's initial on the chimney since I first saw it sometime during my elementary school years. I imagined the house to be a magical place full of colorful walls and comfortable stuffed chairs and sofas. But when I stepped inside, the house was colorless, feeling cold and lifeless. I was the only Mexican in the group and felt somewhat uncomfortable about being there. During our rehearsal, Maggie's boyfriend at the time and several of his friends from a nearby town dropped by. Maggie introduced everyone in the

> room except me. I was hurt that neither of my other classmates, nor the out of town guests, nor especially our teacher sponsor who was my favorite teacher interrupted to say, "You forgot Grace." The two groups went on to chat with each other, leaving me out of the conversation as if I was a mere stump in the field. I felt so irrelevant and couldn't believe this was happening at this time in my school life. Surely, civil relations between Mexican-Americans and Anglos couldn't be so stupid and cruel, but they were. They acted as if that was the way things were supposed to be. I thought back to the day when the teacher pulled me away from playing on the swing with Maggie and realized that kind of thinking still had a place in Taft. (192-3)

This eye-opening experience for Hughes showed her that her place in the dominant culture of Taft had not changed during all the years that she was in school. However, it gave her courage, and strengthened her resolve to get out of there. Her point of view went from being one that was a discombobulated mixture of fear, confusion, and hopelessness, to a young woman who was ready to leave that world behind with a sincere hope for a better future. Going to college was the genesis of that journey. She had been accepted into Durham Business College, and she decided to attend the campus that was in San Antonio, Texas. After she graduated from Durham Business College, Hughes got a civil service job at Kelly Airforce Base in San Antonio. That job led her to a new job, a new beginning in Washington D. C., and a new belief about herself and her abilities.

Within a year of working in civil service, Hughes was transferred to the Pentagon. It was a very exciting prospect to her:

> The day to leave San Antonio came soon enough. My dream to travel to a place far away from Taft was about to come true….Yet, I was more than aware of the risks that lay ahead. I didn't know anyone in Washington, D. C., and new even

> less about the culture and temperament of my new surroundings. Nonetheless, my excitement couldn't be contained. I was ready to start a new life and vowed not to look back. (193)

Hogan wrote from the first person, and point of view as well. She included stories of her people, because she sees their tales as part of her identity:

> There are accounts of what our Indian world was like a little over a century ago. I've read the descriptions of Chickasaws before the Trail of Tears, the accounts of our beauty. Then, later, our brokenness. Our people became so fragmented we are nearly tragically missing from the pages of history. But then, in those eyewitness accounts, it was said how beautiful we Chickasaws were. (54)

When Hogan began writing her memoir, she imagined a story about brokenness and pain and family isolation. But as she began writing the book, her point of view and the story she was telling began to change:

> When pain took up residence in my body, I spent years learning it, speaking with it, befriending it, dreaming it and seeking out modern medicines and plants that might heal it, trying to coax it away with charms, as with doctors of all kinds. Finally, my doctors became earth, water, light, and air. They were animals, plants, and kindred spirits. It wasn't healing I found or a life free from pain, but a kind of love and kinship with a similarly broken world…This is a book about love. It didn't begin that way. I sat down to write about pain and wrote, instead, about healing, history, and survival. The work revealed to me that there is a geography of the human spirit, common to all peoples. (16)

Thus, Hogan concluded that her book and her point of view was really about love, and healing.

Similarly, Hart began her memoir in the first person, narrator of her story with these illuminating words: "I am nobody. And my story is the same as a million others. Poor

Mexican American. Female child. We all look alike: dirty feet, brown skin, downcast eyes. You have seen us if you have driven through south Texas on the way to Mexico. We are there-walking barefoot by the side of the road. During harvest time there are fewer of us-we are with our families in the fields."[51]

She was a keen observer of life at an early age. As the book opens, she is a helpless little girl that is a burden to her family:

> When I turned around to go back to my parents, I saw a black Ford pull up next to the migrant camp. Three nuns in black habits got out. They were walking toward the stop-sign-shaped house, where my father was sharpening hoes on the front steps. I ran to get there first. I burst through the door and told my mother we had company. When she came out, they asked her how the children would be cared for while the parents worked in the fields. It was the first time my mother had been on the migrant circuit with six children. She said she didn't know. They offered to take the littlest ones with them for the summer. It would cost only what they could pay—a dollar a week they said. It was a charity the church offered for the migrants. My mother felt she had no choice but to send me there. Leaving me at the edge of the field while they worked was dangerous, since the rows of beets were half a mile long and I was only three. My eleven-year-old sister, Diamantina, was too young to work. The child labor laws said you had to be twelve to work in the fields. So Diamantina would go with me and be schooled there. Rudy was also too young to work, but because he was Rudy and a male child, he didn't have to go with the nuns. (15)

Hart's point of view changes throughout her memoir, as the trajectories of her life change and new possibilities open up to her. For instance, when she started matriculating through elementary school, she began to see that she had certain gifts that would open up new possibilities for her: "Mrs. Frances, my third grade teacher, let the class vote on who should get the "Honor Pin" for being the best student in class. They nomi-

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[51] Elva Trevino Hart, *Barefoot Heart: Stories of a Migrant Child.* (Tempe: Bilingual Press, 1999), 1.

nated and voted for me. It was the first time I was singled out as a good student."[52] As she was ending her fourth year in school her brother, Rudy, was graduating from high school. His graduation ceremony was a pivotal time for Hart and her family:

> There was a lot of excitement in the Mexican community because the valedictorian that year was Dolores Trevino. She had same last name as ours but was not related to us. It was the first time a Mexican woman had been valedictorian. The only thing I remembered from her speech was that she said she was going to college at the University of Texas. I sat there in my chair in my blue chiffon dress…I had gotten both the honor pins, both in the third and in the fourth grade. Maybe I could go to college too. That would be the biggest turning point of all. (151)

From this time forward, her view point changed again, and she decided to do whatever she had to succeed in life: First came college. Hart worked hard towards this goal while she matriculated from grade to grade. The end of her senior year of high school, she found out she was the valedictorian and felt the confidence of reaching her goal. But, with it came a bittersweet reality:

> I went back to the library, took a book down from a shelf and sat apart from my friends, pretending to be reading. There alone, I thought about where I had come to. The announcement was bittersweet for me. Sweet because it was an affirmation that all my hard work would be recognized. Bitter because it meant that yet again I would be singled out as different. Different from my peer group, different from my siblings, different from my community. I wanted nothing more than to be one of a group. A student among students, a sister among siblings, a Mexican among Mexicans. (205)

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[52] Ibid. 141.

Hart ended this part of her story by reasserting the point that reaching her goal(s) meant losing connections that were familiar to her. Gaining a new life in the culture of social and professional advancement would cost her the thing she had held dear up until that point in her life: to be part of "a group" She wrote:

> I saw that once I finished high school I had to leave and probably not come back except to visit. My parents expected no more of me than to be a local Mexican girl who married a local Mexican guy and became a mamacita, a comadre, a tia, and finally an abuelita. If I stayed in town and made tortillas every day, and tamales at Christmas, menudo late on Saturday night, and barbacoa on Sunday morning, it would be fine with them. I admired people who could stay connected to the family and the local support systems. They never had to feel alone. I had to sever all ties and try my own wings—alone. (207)

After she graduated from college, Hart became very successful as a computer programmer, and then as a sales representative for IBM who got to fly all over the world. However, she could not get away from feeling like her father, working hard and traveling from place to place in a management role for IBM. Ultimately, she resigned from IBM and started writing.

Themes

Anne Moody

Anne Moody has several themes woven throughout the narrative. The paramount theme is destructive power of prejudice. She highlights how it is manifested in different forms. The primary type of prejudice is that of whites against blacks. But, Moody also highlights the prejudice of lighter skinned blacks towards darker skinned blacks. After

her father's best friend, Bush, was killed in an accident while harvesting cotton, Bush's widow caught his eye:

> Florence was a mulatto, high yellow with straight black hair. She was the envy of all the women on the plantation. After Bush's death they got very particular about where their men were going and they watched Florence like a bunch of hawks. She couldn't even go outdoors without some woman peeping at her and reporting that she was now coming out of the house. Mama had never considered Florence or any of the other women a threat because she was so beautiful herself. She was slim, tall, and tawny-skinned, with high cheekbones and long dark hair. (18)

Moody experienced each kind of prejudice, which caused her great pain. One incident in particular accentuated this malady in her life regarding her place in society as opposed to children who were white. She had made the mistake of trying to be friends with white children.

> Now all of a sudden they were white, and their whiteness made them better than me. I now realized that not only were they better than me because they were white, but everything they owned and everything connected with them was better than what was available to me. . .Their homes were large and beautiful with indoor toilets and every other convenience that I knew of at the time. Every house I had ever lived in was a one or two room shack with an outdoor toilet. It really bothered me that they had all these nice things, and we had nothing. (38)

She saw the worst manifestation of racism and prejudice when she was fourteen years old. A Black boy, named Emmitt Till, was lynched by white men while visiting Mississippi. He was from Chicago, which was a much more progressive and tolerant place for African Americans to live. He was killed because he did not know the "rules"

in Mississippi. He did not understand the social taboos and mores.[53] Moody's mother explained it to her like this:

> He was killed because he got out of place with a white woman. A boy from Mississippi would have known better than that. This boy was from Chicago. Negros up North have no respect for people. They think they can get away with anything. He just came to Mississippi and put a whole lot of notions in the boys' heads here and stirred up a lot of trouble. (38-9)

When Moody was in college she participated in the sit-in at Woolworth's all white lunch counter in Jackson, Mississippi. It was one of the most violent episodes she ever experienced and was devastated by the outcome:

> We sat there for three hours taking a beating when the manager decided to close the store because the mob had begun to go wild with stuff from other counters. . . .About ninety policeman were standing outside the store; they had been watching the whole thing through the windows, but had not come in to stop the mob or do anything. (267)

She became very disillusioned after this experience.

> After the sit-in, all I could think of was how sick Mississippi whites were. They believed so much in the segregated Southern way of life, they would kill to preserve it. I sat there in the NAACP office and thought of how many times they had killed when this way of life was threatened. . . .Before the sit-in, I had always hated the whites in Mississippi. Now I knew that it was impossible to hate sickness. The whites had a disease, an incurable disease in the final stage. What were our chances against such a disease? (267)

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[53] Emmett Till's accuser, Carolyn Bryant Donham, recently admitted that she liedabout him. *https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2017/.../emmett-till.../97683096/*

During these college years, she also became involved with civil rights activists Medgar Evers and Martin Luther King.

A second theme in Moody's book is poverty and hunger. She repeatedly uses food to illustrate the extreme abjection in which she grew up. For most of her childhood, her family lived a hand-to-mouth type of existence. On many days, they ate nothing but bread and beans. At times, they supplemented their diets with table scraps and milk or peanut butter from middle-class white families for whom her mother worked. Moody commented on this practice: "Mrs. Cook didn't pay Mama much money at all, but she would give her the dinner leftovers to bring home for us at night. This was all we had to eat."[54]

Food is also used to mark the powerful distinctions in status between blacks and whites. It is representative of the difference in wealth between blacks and whites. In addition to the handouts from the white people for whom she worked, Moody's mother, Toosweet, found other ways to feed her family. She stole corn that was meant for the Cooks' cows; Moody recounted how Toosweet cleverly tricked Mrs. Cook:

> The Cooks planted the corn for their cattle, but often when Mama didn't have enough money for food she would sneak out at night and take enough to last us a week. Once Mrs. Cook came out there and put up a scarecrow. She said the crows were eating up all the corn. When mama came home from the café that evening she laughed like crazy. Then she started taking even more corn. She had a special way of stealing the corn that made it look just like the crows had taken it. (20)

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[54] Ibid. 19-20.

Passive aggressive tactics such as the stealing of the corn served two purposes for Moody's family and the other Negroes who lived in such impoverished and oppressive conditions. The first purpose being getting much needed food for her family. The second one being a way to get back at the people and the society that has placed them in such dire straits, and who valued farm animals more than their dark-skinned neighbors.

Fear and stress are the third themes threaded throughout Moody's memoir. They are an omnipotent presence that is woven in and out of the pages. Her relationship with these powerful emotions started when she was a little girl:

> Reverend Cason, the minister of the church taught us in school….He was so big he towered over us in the classroom like a giant. In church he preached loud, and in school he talked loud….I remember once, he caught a boy lifting up a girl's dress with his foot. He called him up to his desk and whipped him in his hands with that big switch until he cried and peed all over himself….I was so scared of him I never did anything….Instead, I sat there all day and looked out the window at the graveyard and counted the tombstones. One day he caught me. "Moody, gal! If you don't stop lookn' out that window, I'll make you go out in that graveyard and sit on the biggest tombstone out there all day." Nobody laughed because there were all as scared of him as I was. (21)

Fear chased Moody through her childhood and her early school days, but it escalated as she grew older:

> School ended and sadly I said goodbye to Mrs. Claiborne. Raymond had said that on Monday morning, my first week out of school, we would start chopping cotton….I didn't even know anything about chopping. All I thought you had to do was pick it.…That night as I went to bed, I thought of how hot it had been all day.…I fell asleep worrying about hoeing in that boiling hot sun, and I had a terrible dream.…When I got out of bed that morning I was sweating and shaking like someone with palsy. I couldn't touch my breakfast. Mama kept asking me what was wrong, but I was too scared to tell her about the dream, so I just told her that I wasn't feeling well. I hoped that she would tell me to stay home but

> instead she handed me two aspirins and sent me off to the cotton field with the rest. (83-4)

When Moody entered high school, she continued to grow more aware of the dangerous conditions she and her fellow African Americans experienced on a daily basis; she continued to grow more fearful of the perilous culture. She had survived the threat of sexual abuse at the hands of her stepfather and coach, but now she feared for her life:

> Not only did I enter high school with a new name, [Essie May was the name she was called as a child] but also with a completely new insight into the life of Negroes in Mississippi. I was now working for one of the meanest white women in town, and a week before school started, Emmitt Till was killed. Up until his death, I had heard of Negroes found floating in a river or dead somewhere with their bodies riddled with bullets. But I didn't know the mystery behind these killings then. (121)

In the following quote Moody expands on her deed seeded fear:

> Before Emmitt Till's murder, I had known the fear of hunger, hell, and of the Devil. But now there was a new fear known to me—the fear of being killed, just because I was black. This was the worst of my fears. I knew once I got food, the fear of starving to death would leave. I was also told that if I were a good girl, I wouldn't have to fear the Devil or hell. But I didn't know what one had to do or not do as a Negro not to be killed. Probably just being a Negro period was enough, I thought. (125-6)

Emmett Till's murder affected Moody in several ways. It didn't just heighten fears that she had regarding white people, she also began to feel a deep seeded anger:

> I was fifteen years old when I began to hate people. I hated the white men who murdered Emmett Till and I hated all the other whites who were responsible for the countless murders Mrs. Rice [her teacher] had told me about and those I vaguely remembered from childhood. But I also hated Negroes. I hated them

> for not standing up and doing something about the murders. In fact, I think I had a stronger resentment toward Negroes for letting whites kill them than toward the whites. Anyway, it was at this stage in my life that I began to look upon Negro men as cowards. I could not respect them for smiling in a white man's face, addressing him as Mr. So—and—So, saying yessuh and nossuh when after they were home behind closed doors that same white man was a son of a bitch, a bastard, or any other name more suitable than mister. (129)

Moody's uneasiness continued throughout her college years and beyond. She was given a scholarship to play basketball at Tougaloo College. When she arrived there, she thought about leaving because of the color and tone of her skin. In a conversation with a friend, Moody's anxieties were highlighted:

> "Look at that window, Moody, I want to show you something," she said pointing at a white student out on the lawn talking to some of the guys. "She's a student a Tougaloo and she ain't white either," she said and left my room. I didn't believe her—that girl was as white as any woman I had ever seen. I went right downstairs and asked her if she was a student at Tougaloo. When she said, "Yes, I go there," without even looking at me, I just walked away thinking that Tougaloo wasn't the place for me after all.…That summer, while working at the restaurant, I seriously started looking for a school to attend in New Orleans. Since L.S.U. was only thirty-five dollars a semester for off campus students I thought of going there. But when I learned that it had just been integrated and that all the teachers were white, I talked myself out of going. I was afraid that those white students would murder me in class. (239)

Moody wraps up her memoir by discussing her time in the Civil Rights Movement. The barbarity she witnessed during that time in her life only intensified the fearful state in which she had been living all of her life. After graduating from college, Moody returned to Mississippi to continue her work in the movement. Then the work took her out of Mississippi for many years:

> I felt worse about everything than I had ever felt before….My head began to ache. I found myself running. I was trying to get away. I felt like the walls of Mississippi were closing in on me….I had to get out and let the world know what was happing to us. I ran faster, and faster....Parked right in front of us was a Greyhound bus…."Hey Moody! C'mon get on, we're going to Washington, D. C." It was little twelve year old Gene Young leaning his head out the window.…I just managed to squeeze in.…Images of all that had happened crossed my mind: the Taplin burning, the Birmingham church bombing, Medgar Evers' murder, the blood gushing out of McKinnley's head, and all the other murders. …I could feel the tears welling up in my eyes. (383-4)

During an interview with Deborah Spencer, from Oral History Projects, Moody explicates on this moment:

> I got on a bus in Jackson, Mississippi; that bus was headed for Washington, D. C. I ran away from Canton when a kid had gotten his brains splattered all over the church grounds down in Canton…When I saw that bus going to Washington and I yelled up there to Bob Moses where it was going, and I was just gittin', no suitcase, no clothes, not a toothbrush, nothing! I just ran and got in it and sat down. And I was in Washington without anything but what I had on my back and shoes on my feet.[55]

Grace Flores-Hughes

A theme present in the memoir of Grace Flores-Hughes is identity confusion. This quote exemplifies her lack of connectedness to herself and her family:

> From the beginning I thought my name was *bastarda*…Later on, when I entered school on the North Side of town my name changed to wetback… Those early beginnings are likely what made me such a keen observer of the, so called, human nature. So that's how it all started for me, an endless search of who I was and why I was here and how I would make life for myself different from that available in *el Barrio*. (1)

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[55] Anne Moody, interview by Debra Spencer, *Oral History Project 403*, AU76, April 15, 2017

When she found out about her father, Grace's mother, whom she called Ama, told her he was dead. Eventually, Amagrande, her grandmother, told her the truth. Hughes was born into a large family, but there was one family member that was missing: her father. The mixed messages she received as answers regarding his whereabouts became part of her search for an identity:

> I learned from Amagrande that a few weeks before I was born, Ama went to the Flores' home to ask Adan for financial help, but instead was met by Adan's six sisters and their mother, Dona Aurelia. Dona Aurelia stood at the door and refused to let Ama inside, rounding up her daughters to cooperatively push Ama down the porch steps. Ama clung to one of the pillars along the stairs to keep from tumbling to the ground, cradling her bulging belly all the while, to guard against the threat of impact. '*Cuando nace tu bebito, que le testen la sangre, para saber si Adan es su padre*,[56]' Dona Aurelia screamed back to Ama. (33-4)

Realizing that she was the illegitimate daughter of a man she had never met and whose family did not want her heightened her confusion regarding who she was.

When she started school, she turned to her teachers hoping they would like her and protect her from the bullying by the Anglo children who went to her school. However, she didn't feel liked and concluded that her ethnicity was a barrier to acceptance:

> After school, I'd run home and scrub my body with lots of soap, hoping that my skin would turn milky white like Cheryl's. My curly black hair was covered with a dark heavy scarf most of the time so the teacher wouldn't compare my unruly mop with Cheryl's soft, straight, blond hair or that of the other Anglo girls in the class. (75)

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[56] Loosely translated, the Spanish phrase means: When your baby is born they will test the blood, to know if Adan is the father.

Hughes grew up in a culture where racism was deeply embedded in the people and the institutions. She encountered another theme, racial discrimination, the first day of school when she was placed in a special class. Her grandmother took Grace the first day and because Amagrande could not speak English, the first grade teacher kicked them out of her room. Grace had been too scared to speak up for herself when the teacher asked her if she could speak English, and was placed in a special class:

> I cannot remember when it occurred to me that Mrs. Nance's classroom wasn't a first-grade class. My class was called "primer." It was a special class designed for Mexicans whom the school identified as being non-English proficient. The special attention we received was a slow process of teaching us the basics, because somehow we were supposed to be slow learners since we didn't speak English. Yet, not one student in my class was tested to determine whether we were slow learners, nor did anyone in the school system test our English proficiency. (68-9)

Hughes highlights the issue of discrimination with an example from her high school years:

> As I prepared to graduate from high school I found myself in such an untenable situation that I feared my road out of Taft was blocked forever. During my freshman year, I had enrolled in what the school called a non-college program. The non-college program was nothing more than a quick method to get Mexican-Americans through and out of school. The school officials sold it as an alternative. An Alternative! To What? I remembered a school official saying 'You can always switch to the college program if you change your mind about going to college.' But by my junior year a classmate helped me understand what I had gotten myself into and she warned that I was going to be lucky to land a job mopping floors at the Piggly Wiggly if I remained in the non-college program. 'That non-college program is nothing but an attempt to keep Mexican-Americans down,' she said. (187-8)

Skin color was another sign of the town's racist problem. Taft, Texas was dominated by the white people who controlled the town and marginalized the Mexican inhabitants and their language. Hughes had been told about them by members of her family, and through those stories she began to have the belief that light skinned people of European descent were better than she was. This quote shows how she came to have this belief:

> I hadn't been exposed to many *Americanos* before my first day of school. I knew them as *Bolillos, Gabachos, Pan Blancos, Gringos,* Americans and Anglos. At first I thought the names were attributed to different kinds of people. But I came to find all the names referred to one group, white Caucasians. Amagrande and Buelito {Hughes's paternal grandparents} spoke about *los Americanos,* as if they were better than anyone else on earth. '*Ellos no son como nosotros los Mexicanos*, they often stated. My grandparents seemed preoccupied with the color of a person's skin. The way they talked about *los Bolillos* had me convinced that their pale skin, yellow hair, and light-colored eyes made them better than us Mexicans. (67)

In her book, Hughes also commented that it was common to see signs that read, "Niggers, Wetbacks, and dogs aren't welcome,"[57] along highways and streets that led into the town. Hughes expands on the theme of racist cultural markers in the following quote:

> My favorite house on the North Side sat toward the northern end of Green Avenue, painted whited with shiny black shutters and a sprawling lawn like none I'd seen on either side of town.…I kept my dream of living in the big, white house on Green Avenue to myself, mostly because I was afraid that others would try to crush my dream like my friend Helen did one day on our way home from school. 'You are dreaming too big, Graciela. *Estas loca*! You and I will never live in a house like that,' she said laughingly. *Your wrong*, I thought, but deep down I felt we were doomed by which side of the railroad tracks faced our homes. (17-8)

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[57] Ibid. 33

Fear is the third theme in Hughes's memoir; fear of violence that was a part of life in her neighborhood, as is highlighted in this quote:

> Another son, [a neighbor] performed for all of West Pecan Street. He got drunk just about every Friday night and he beat his wife in the process. He'd hit her with his fists as if he was fighting another man, except his wife didn't strike back. He dragged his wife up and down West Pecan Street by her hair, while bobby pins flew in every direction. By the end of the beating, his wife's blue chenille housecoat was covered in blood, as were her face and hair. "*Ayayay! Ayayay! Ayeee!"* his young wife screamed. But no one on our street came to rescue her: not her in-laws, with whom she lived, and not her own parents, who lived nearby. (103)

Hughes also had other fears: ending up pregnant as a young girl and never amounting to anything; of white people; of her family's superstitious ways; and of her mother and grandparents being sent back to Mexico by *La Migra*, the Spanish term for ICE:

> Amagrande feared that *La Migra* would deport her and Buelito [grandfather] to Mexico. Although both of my grandparents as well as my Ama were legal residents, they weren't American citizens and because of this they feared deportation. I told Amagrande she should become a citizen so she wouldn't fear *La Migra* and so she could vote. But instead of learning how to become an American citizen, Amagrande held forth from her rickety rocking chair, complaining that *El Paul Taxes* wouldn't let her vote. (95)

Hughes expands on the theme of fear by writing about a situation she observed while she was with her grandfather, Buelito. A tall man ordered Buelito to leave a restaurant:

> Buelito said the tall Anglo man's pale, white face turned a deep red color while he forcefully shoved Buelito out of the restaurant. "*Lo queria matar al gringo miserable,"* Buelito angrily recalled. Buelito hated walking away from *el gringo miserable.* He hadn't been afraid to fight against President Diaz and his army in Mexico <but> He admitted that he was afraid to fight back, for fear that

> he and his family would be arrested by the Texas Rangers, or perhaps even deported by *La Migra*….Yet, ultimately Buelito allowed the Anglos of south Texas to define him; he didn't learn to speak English, didn't try to blend in with American society, and didn't become an American citizen. He chose to exist in the past, telling stories about his Spanish ancestry and Mexican life until the day he died. (26-7)

Finally, she described the fear of rape and sexual abuse by white men who took privileges with the young Mexican women, and girls in Taft. It was a common practice that was protected by the silence of the victims, and a school that turned its back on the young Mexican girls:

> There are so many things that I witnessed the first six years of my school life, some of which left me frightened and sad. There was a third-grade classmate who one day asked if she could walk home with me. She was a sweet girl who, along with me and other girls our age, offered flowers to *la Virgen de Guadalupe* at the Catholic Church on Tuesday evenings. That day, as my classmate and I walked out of the school building, the janitor waved to us while he cleaned the floor with a large machine. When we stepped out the front door, my classmate suddenly stopped and ordered, "Wait here. I am going back to the classroom to get something…." I didn't know what to do, walk home or wait for my classmate. I decided to walk back into the dimly lit building to find my classmate, but there wasn't anyone inside our classroom. As I made my exit, I heard low voices coming from the classroom across the hall. I slipped in quietly and noticed in an adjacent supply room a pair of black and white oxford shoes on tiptoe facing a pair of dark, worn-out rubber shoes. The upper part of their bodies was hidden by a portable blackboard, behind which they were standing. I tiptoed quietly to the blackboard and peeked around the corner. The same man who moments before was polishing the floor was bent down, pressing his lips against those of my classmate, while one of his hands was lost under her skirt. I became paralyzed, unable to move much less think what to do next. (77)

Hughes began to see a pattern. Many of the girls she grew up with were preyed upon by older Anglo and Mexican men and were traumatized by those experiences. She

realized that these types of situations were not just happening in the community at large, it was also happening in her family:

> I curiously but sadly watched the mistakes of my three half- sisters and half-brother. It was like watching an airplane fall from the sky and being unable to prevent the crash. Those mistakes were among the ones that I had to avoid if I was going to break into the culture of advancement within America, and I knew it wasn't going to be easy. (46)

Endurance in the face of racism, and oppression is a fourth theme and a hallmark in Hughes' life and book. This pattern started when she was a little girl:

> I grew tired of being called a wetback day in and day out. My classmates did too, but they didn't seem to want to make an issue of the name calling as I did….One day I decided to fight back. But my nervousness was so intense that my knees almost buckled while I made my way to confront the redhead. She and a group of girls stood in the hallway as I made my approach….I gallantly tiptoed to make direct eye contact with her, within seconds, I lofted a gob of spit at my target but missed her forehead. My warm spit splattered over her eyes and nose instead. (70)

Hughes did not waver from her stance against the girl who had been tormenting her even when her teacher beat her with a long wooden ruler, in front of her classmates; she also persevered through the austerity of doing hard labor in the hot Texas summers:

> Picking cotton was painstakingly laborious and that realization, along with the south Texas heat made me appreciate what the real cotton pickers went through to earn a living…Something different happened every day in the cotton fields and many times the "happening" was more tragic than funny. By the time I left the cotton fields in 1964, I had witnessed a handful of children killed by the wheels of cotton trailers who were left under the trailers by their parents while they picked cotton. And it seemed like a snake bit one of us on an almost daily basis. (109)

Throughout her childhood Hughes cultivated the inner strength to envision a different future for herself than what she was observing in her family, and in the lives of her peers:

> Every member of my immediate family had dropped out of school, so talk about graduating from high school, let alone attending college, didn't come up. Ama provided generously for my whims and desires, but she was short in providing the support I needed and so desperately wanted in school. She missed parent-teacher meetings and failed to show up at my school events—she was simply not engaged in my academics. My decision to enroll in the non-college program, and my low grades, weren't going to get me accepted into any college in the state, especially the University of Texas at Austin, which was where I REALLY wanted to go. That wish had as much chance of being fulfilled as my being crowned Miss America. A classmate insisted that I need not apply there. "Only Anglos go to UT. Besides, you don't have the grades. Come along with *la Raza* (slang for Hispanics) to Del Mar Junior College in Corpus," she offered. But Corpus was simply not far enough away for my taste. (189)

Determined to get a college education, Hughes found a school that would accept her. It was Durham Business College in San Antonio, Texas. She had a good experience there and made many friends. She commented on the sad reality that most of the women she had befriended there were not able to break out of the cultural stronghold in which their families had raised them:

> At Durham College I had made many friends. I wished that any one of them would accompany me to Washington D. C. But the controlled world they came from wasn't going to allow them to travel anywhere after graduation except back to their home towns where most were expected to find work to help support their families. My friends were bright women who had the ability to achieve just about anything they set their minds to…That was one aspect of our Mexican Culture I had a difficult time understanding and accepting. Ama never put that kind of demand on me. (200)

She followed that up with earning a B.A. in Psychology from the University of the District of Columbia. Her highest educational achievement was garnering a master's degree from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. It was a specialized degree for people who worked in the civil service:

> In the summer of 1979 I left the department to work on my master's degree at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. Two years earlier I had graduated from the University of the District of Columbia where I earned a Bachelor of Arts degree of Psychology through the Upward Mobility Program….The Harvard master's program for which I was selected was primarily designed for up and coming mid and high-level civil servants throughout the federal government. (230)

It was the very first job for which she was hired after graduating from Durham Business College that opened the door to a career that would eventually lead her to Washington D. C. and public service in President Reagan's administration, and in both Bush cabinets:

> When my training ended I had no idea what I'd do with the skills I learned at Durham until I ran into a couple of classmates. "We're going to the Post Office to pick up government forms; want to join us?" The asked excitedly. They were hoping to find work at one of the military bases in the area. I hadn't given much thought to securing a job at a military base since my cousin Gloria had warned me that it could take months, if not years, for a vacancy to open up. Nevertheless, I took up my classmates' offer and along we went to the nearest Post Office to fill out federal employment forms. But the clerk on duty didn't exactly lighten up our day. While he handed out the forms he warned sternly, "Don't get your hopes up—none of the military bases are doing much hiring these days." The four of us stood staring at each other, not sure what to do next, until I spoke up. "What the hell does he know, let's fill them out anyway?" I didn't expect to ever hear from any of the military bases, but to my surprise a job offer from Kelly Airforce Base came almost immediately after I had mailed in the employment

> forms…In fact, getting the job at Kelly turned out to be an important stepping stone toward my career in public service. (197)

She eventually landed a job at the Pentagon and a political appointment in President Regan's administration as the director of the Community Relations Service. For her, this was the high point of her success.

> The White House announced the president's intent to nominate me in the Rose Garden during Hispanic Heritage Week in September 1987.…During the ceremony, I stood alongside President Reagan and Vice President Bush and some other key members of the administration. As I faced the rolling television cameras and heard President Reagan announce his intent to nominate me, I thought about my days in Taft. I thought about my school friends who had influenced my life, in yet another way. But mostly, I thought about how proud Amagrande would have been to see me on stage with the head of *el gobierno* of the United States that she so proudly hailed yet feared. I realized the position to which I was being nominated by President Reagan wasn't the end all of political appointments. But having reached the assistant attorney general level after starting as a GS-2, was for me the pinnacle of success. (262-3)

Hughes also experienced a good amount of stress while working at her job at the Pentagon, "I spent every waking hour at the Pentagon and didn't so much as have a thought that anyone noticed the long hours I worked, never mind the enormous stress I endured."[58] The backbiting culture of politics in Washington D. C. was also taking a toll on her:

> CRS was becoming the appointment from hell. I was called more than once by the Democratic staff of the Judiciary Committee for interviews about my qualifications. It seemed they were listening to my detractors from CRS. It was becoming clearer and clearer by the day that the deputy at CRS wanted my job and was doing all he could to derail my nomination….I figured in their own tacit

[58] Ibid. 217.

> way they were supporting the deputy and in essence purposely fueling the flames of his acrimonious actions and those of his two cronies against my nomination. (264)

During this time, the second wave of feminism was in full swing, but Hughes did not become involved with it. She did not really trust that the movement was inclusive of women of color:

> While I learned much from my feminist associates and friends, I didn't get caught up in the feminist movement for two reasons. I saw the movement as being led by well to do Anglo women whose lives had been based on more privilege than poverty. They could reach their goals as Anglo women a lot easier than those of us still struggling with our ethnic heritage. Add to that our class status and we faced a serious challenge making our way up America's ladder of success….If we are going to say we support every woman's right then that's exactly what we should do, regardless of faith, color or political persuasion. (242)

Linda Hogan

Silence is one of the themes in Linda Hogan's life story. She suffered from a lack of being able to put her needs and pain into words as a child, as did other girls she knew:

> As a young person coming from silences of both family and history, I had little of the language that I needed to put a human life together. I was inarticulate to voice it, therefore to know it, even from within. I had an unnamed grief not only my own. I grew up with girls who cut, or hit, or burned themselves, as if it was a way to kill the self or trade the pain of what resided within for external pain. There was never a language to say it, to form a geography or map or history of what had happened, not only in terms of history, but to ourselves. We grew in silence. (56)

Hogan's mother was silent and distant. One of the longings of her childhood was to know her mother. Even though she was physically present in the house, Hogan felt as if

she was a lonely and abandoned child who searched for her mother's identity through family heirlooms:

> I searched for my mother in photographs and greeting cards that were saved in the large, leather-bound family Bible. Later, I opened her bureau drawers, looking for clues to her life, and finding them as if they would shape my own world…And what I found in the drawers and closets was all I knew of the woman I lived with, who birthed me. (95-6)

She also watched her mother when she was a little girl, in efforts to try to know her:

> I hid beneath tables and watched her. I concealed myself in corners and looked out, trying to know her….My mother had no claim, even to herself. I think she was a victim of brain chemistry in a time when there were no medications. She wanted to be invisible, inaudible, She was fearful. Every person's sight that rested on her was one of danger or judgment….Perhaps it is the sad story of that generation, before medications, before the talking cure was widespread. There was a great silence around her, of what I think to be her own history, perhaps of abuse or injury, contained in her skin. Whatever it was, she was wounded, and because of the times, did not, could not, heal. (94-5)

Hogan's father, while he certainly had his own struggles, was easier for her to understand:

> My father, who has a beautiful and content spirit, recently told me and a friend that I was one of the reasons he quit drinking. One night, when he was drunk, and I was a baby, he was bouncing me on the bed and I fell to the floor, hitting my head. I cried for so long, he couldn't comfort me. He went to the icebox to get me some food and the only thing in it, he says, was Jim Beam. Sometime after that he was in the hospital for a year with cirrhosis. A year is a very long time, then, a far cry from the man who met my lovely mother, a handsome Indian man in a pinstripe suit who bowed to her so formally and asked her to dance. They won a jitterbug contest without even knowing it was a contest. (51-2)

When she was in her late twenties, she adopted two Native American girls. They were sisters that were ten and five years old. They had been in the American foster care system for years and likely they had suffered. Hogan viewed them as starting a new life with her as if they had just been born:

> There was no history of the girls' lives to come with them. There were no photographs of them as children, no stories passed down to them, no stories about their first words or their first steps. No one who loved them. They were beginning a life with us already wounded, born into their new life fully created at the ages of five and ten. (71)

Just like newborn babies, they couldn't/didn't talk, and Hogan was very accepting of this.

Another theme is emotional poverty. Hogan suffered from what she called a poverty of the heart. Her mother was not affectionate or physically demonstrative to her. Her father was emotionally absent even when he was physically in the home:

> As a girl I was like clay still unfired by time and life and thought, unconscious even of myself. Even before we set out to cross an ocean, I had already been living in a world of betweens. Not just between cultures, as a mixed blood girl, and times, but in other ways, too. I'd existed in a middle world between girlhood and womanhood. It wasn't limbo. It was a life more empty than that….Perhaps "between" was, is, at the root of my very existence. (34)

These conditions left her open to attentions from men to whom she should have been totally off limits as a twelve-year old girl. The first person to ever tell her he loved her was soldier who was twenty-four years old whom she met when her father was stationed in Germany. His name was Robert. She had a physical relationship with him which she calls her first marriage:

> I was twelve at the time of this relationship I call marriage. Mercifully he was a tender gentle lover, a kind man. Still, my body was too young for it. I'd always been susceptible to colds, tonsillitis, and infections, but added to this now was blood in my urine, and fainting spells that, I suppose, were the result of emotional trauma. (41)

Physical pain was another theme that Hogan has woven into her life writing. Having to deal with pain in one form or another has been a continuous experience. When she was fifty-two years old, Hogan fell from a horse and experienced severe head trauma and amnesia. During her time of convalescence, she suffered from much pain, and she gave it a voice:

> Three weeks later I woke up and found myself in another ambulance as I was being transferred, the second time from one hospital to another. And here, I thought I was awake. I thought I was steadfastly anchored in time once again, leaving the shadow world partly behind, still wondering what happened, if I'd been a car accident….Over and over again I asked what had happened to me. For over two years there was short term memory loss as events failed to lay themselves down in the brain. Even now, I forget last week, last month. (164)

She used pain to connect with her Native American grandmother:

> According to my father, his mother was never sick a day in her life. Her only visit to a hospital was when she was burned by hot grease which spilled onto her stomach and legs from a kettle on the stove. Now, with pain of my own, I sometimes think of her suffering, the burning skin, the most painful of injuries, the tissue of flesh growing over, and I grieve her pain, all of it, the history and grief of times. (122)

Her Native American roots are a central theme that is woven into her memoir by using the metaphor of a broken clay doll named The Woman Who Watches Over The World. Her journey in writing her memoir began when she spotted this woman.

> I remember the first time I saw the clay woman….The clay woman from San Martin, Mexico, was full and beautiful. Attached to the earth, she flew over it….Her name was written on a tag, "The Bruja Who Watches Over the Earth." Bruja is the Spanish word for a woman healer, soothsayer, or sometimes witch. I loved this flying soothsayer who protected the lands beneath her…I bought the clay woman and asked the clerk to mail her to me, then I returned home, anticipating the day The Woman Who Watches Over the World would appear. When she arrived, she wasn't whole….The woman who watches over the world was broken….At first I was disappointed, but then I thought, Yes, the woman who watches over us is as broken as the land, as hurt as the flesh of people. She is a true representation of the world she flies above. Something between us and earth is broken. (17-8)

Being a Native American is the center of Hogan's existence, and her native identity is a theme in her book. The reality of her people and their journey is intertwined with hers, and it is hers. She speaks about brokenness, pain, and love in this memoir, but her main point of view throughout the narrative is as a Native American, a Chickasaw:

> For myself, [I am] one of those people who survived my tribal identity [which] has always been chasing after me, to keep its claims on my body and heart. I can't escape and be whole and real. As if I am the lung and it is the air breathing me in and out like waves of the ocean, rhythms and cycles of wind. It is the blood; I'm just the container. It is the ocean. It carries me and I float. It is something Native people can never explain to those who don't know it, and I have given up trying to do so. As with life, as with water, attempts to explain it slip through fingers and minds. I only know that the heart and mind are created by culture, past and present. (27)

Hogan knew from a young age that she needed to be free, and, also that she needed to leave the world in which she grew up:

> Soon, everyone but me was sick, my mother, father, and brother were unable to get up from their bunks….And so, while they remained isolated and sick in the dark cabin of the sea vessel, I was given freedom….In the dark gray coat Robert {her boyfriend in Germany} had bought me, I stood on the deck and watched the water and sky. I watched the occasional spumes of whales in the distance, and felt the cold spray on my nose, my hair thick with dampness, when I stood outside for hours watching the lead-gray water….I watched people, made a friend, smoked her cigarettes….In the middle of the sea, and for the first time in my memory, I felt inside a cellular aliveness. It was a freedom….Even rocked by the ocean, it was as if I'd been water all along and had finally reached sea level and could rest in myself, floating there in the middle of the sea. (37-8)

At the age of fifteen, Hogan entered the world of work and this enabled her to have more control over her life and a certain amount of freedom: "I was fifteen, and had just returned from Germany. I worked full time as a nurse's aide in a nursing home….After I had begun to work and could afford it, I took up skating….From my little area on the ice I watched Peggy Fleming skate her near perfect 8's."[59]

This part of her native roots, the healing power of water is sprinkled throughout her memoir as a connection to the earth and her native roots:

It must have been a desert person who said from dust we come to dust we return, because for most of us, water is the true element of our origin. Broken birth waters signal our emergence into the air world, and through our lifetimes it is water that sustains us, water that is the human substance, the matter of cells. Some years ago, I turned my attention to water. Perhaps, as people have done since the beginning of time, I went to water to seek a cure, and became enamored of the deep…I swam in the ocean overcom-

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[59] Linda Hogan, *The Woman Who Watches Over the World,* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2001), 145-6.

ing…I frequented water in an inner way, looking at the depths of my own life, my body of brine moisture and blood river. (31-2)

Also, water provides a way for her to visualize herself in a positive way and to link her to her Chickasaw roots:

> It's only now, from within my own body, and from the other half of a century, that I can begin to see myself. I am now just becoming a human being, as many tribes say. And I am becoming a person old and joyous and vulnerable in new ways. Half a century is a great beginning, and still the mystery of the self is there. Like water, I rush toward a destiny, a balance, a harmony. I call it sea level….I suppose I have always been caught in the wave and tides of time, place, and history. There were my grandmothers and grandfathers, whose parings, some loving and some miserable, brought me to life. Then there is the body with its innumerable waves of memory, its own destiny, its own tides and ways a single person is shaped. (33)

In the final pages of her memoir, Hogan reaffirms her life's link to the earth and to her Chickasaw roots and to the power of words that express life's connections:

> In my own life, I was changed by pain, shaped by victory, shaped by history, transformed by events, viruses, accidents, even chemistries.…It wasn't grace so much as it was the courage to look at myself and others, full in the face with a core of honesty, to look upon a greater world. In my early life, I, too, was a collapsing star, and a black hole is said to collapse forever. Hopeless, I did not ever think I would, one day, be at any place of emergence, washed up like a first person from Sipapuna, nearly new in the world. But sometimes a person climbs out, against all odds, like the river dolphins of the Amazon who are seen to emerge from dangerous, fast-moving whirlpools. (204-5)
>
> Words, I see now, are the defining shape of a human spirit. Without them, we fall. Without them, there is no accounting for the human place in the world. Language is an intimacy not only with others, but even with the self. It creates a person. Without it, in the dawn, in the dark of night, there is no way to know who or what we are. One day the words came. I was an adult. I went to school after work. I read. I wrote. Words came, anchored to the earth, to matter, to the

> wholeness of nature. There was, in this, a fall this time to a holy ground of a different order, a present magic, a light bearing, soul saving presence that illuminated my heart and mind and altered my destiny. Without it, who would guess what, as a human being, I would have become. (56-7)

Elva Trevino Hart

Out of the themes in Elva Trevino Hart's memoir patriarchy is particularly relevant. She provides several poignant examples of the destructive nature of this cultural/familial affliction. The first example takes place when the family was going on the migrant circuit for the first time:

> My father, confident and full of hope and life, climbed into the front seat along with El Indio's oldest son, who also got to sit in front, of course.…My mother settled herself on the floor of the truck. She sat on a blanket with her back to the piles of clothes. She dried her tears with a big sigh and tried to make conversation with El Indio's wife. (6)

For both of the wives to be relegated to sit in the back of the truck with the children is symbolic of their low station in a Hispanic culture. El Indio was the name of the man who owned the truck that drove them to Minnesota. She also speaks of her mother's helplessness when it came to her father's decisions: "My mother was frantic. She was going to the other end of the world with six children and no way to get back for four or five months."[60]

Hart provides a second example of patriarchy in writing about an altercation between her sister Delmira and their father:

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[60]Elva Trevino Hart, *Barefoot Heart: Stories of a Migrant Child*, (Tempe: Bilingual Press, 1999), 5.

> She loved her little athletic body. She moved it constantly, running, jumping and climbing while she sucked two fingers on her right hand and pushed up her dress with her left to fondle her belly button. She felt connected that way. My father thought this an embarrassing habit and yelled at her constantly to stop. She began to hide her habit but wouldn't stop. The summer before she was to start school, my father had had enough. He tied her hands behind her back with a short length of rope, against my mother's pleadings and tears….That night she tried to find a way to sleep, but there was none. On her stomach, on her side, on her back—all these ways hurt. She tried sitting, but then her neck would hurt. After many hours of my father's loud snoring, she finally felt beaten and started to cry, quietly. He had won. (67)

Misogyny is a part of the patriarchal theme. Hart's sister, Delmira, had the misfortune of finding herself alone with one of their male cousins on a family visit. She told her sister:

> When I went in the kitchen, there was the cousin, big and strong, fully a man. It all happened very fast. I saw he was looking at my new breasts pushing my cotton dress out. I froze. 'Look what pretty little lemons,' he said as he took each of them between his thumb and forefinger and twisted them hard. (157)

Delmira related this story to her very tearfully. Her pain was twofold. Not only did her breasts hurt, she was humiliated.

Throughout the narrative, Hart talks of isolation, a third theme in the book: familial isolation because she was the youngest in her family, social isolation because she was Mexican, and lastly, isolation from her peers as it became clear that she was intellectually gifted: "I grew up with a vague feeling of being unwanted and wondering if anyone

could love a child like me. I spent much time feeling as though I bothered everyone; the only time I was all right was when I was alone. And I was alone a lot."[61]

Hart had five older siblings and was the baby of her family:

> As for me, my mother was embarrassed when I was born. I was living proof she still let my father part her legs. She wanted the world to think that she was done with babies and sex. Rudy was already seven years old. My mother was forty-five and my father was fifty when I was conceived. My mother hoped fervently that her lack of periods was due to menopause. But it wasn't. It was me. She didn't tell anyone. She hid me under floppy house dresses, sweaters, aprons, and continual plumpness. Ama is a good liar. When she brought me home from the hospital, my five siblings were shocked. (72)

Hart was also too young to work with her family in the fields when they began to travel the migrant circuit in the spring of 1953. So, she would have to live in a Catholic school under the care of Catholic nuns during the time that her family was in Minnesota. Her eleven-year old sister would have to stay there as well, due to child labor laws that required children to be at least twelve years of age to work. The two of them would only get to see the rest of the family if it rained and the fields were wet. She highlighted her feelings of helplessness and loneliness with this comment, "When we got there, he gave us each a quarter. He said they would come to visit us the next time it rained, and the fields were unworkable, if he could borrow a car."[62]

Racism is a fourth theme in Hart's memoir. In certain places she spoke of it plainly, but normally it just showed up in the undertones of her writing. While on the circuit, Hart's family's home was a migrant camp with a Mexican man who was in charge of

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[61] Ibid. 73.

[62] Ibid. 15.

the migrant workers. They called him *mayordomo.* He answered to the real boss who owned the farm. They called him *El Gringo.*

Hart described their house as a stop-sign shaped house with only one door and windows all around. The tiny humble place was quite different from the main house that was home to the farmer and his family and Hart highlighted the pain she felt when she saw evidence of her place in that world: "Behind where we parked was the farmer's meticulously landscaped house, with a huge lawn bordered with evergreens. We tried not to look at that; it was not for us."[63]

The value of hard work was therefore instilled into his children by her father as a way to obtain one's goals. Working hard on a daily basis to keep the family and home running was a daily reality for Hart and her siblings, as they worked alongside their parents:

> Early morning noises, rattling pots and pans and voices in the kitchen floated through my early morning drowsiness. My father's footsteps coming to wake me…I got dressed and sat down to scrambled eggs and hot tortillas. It was Saturday and it was washday. Ama had the water boiling on the stove and Apa had made the fire outside under the huge black cauldron. I smelled the wood smoke. Ama carred water heated on the kitchen stove and dumped it into the cauldron. The fire under the cauldron kept it boiling. Then she put more on the stove to boil. The clothes were put in the in the wringer washer outdoors; the clothes were individually scrubbed, boiled, washed, and rinsed…Each item was handled separately by each one of us at our stations. We rinsed in soft rain water collected in a barrel under the downspout. Back to nature. (114-5)

[63] Ibid. 8.

As Hart began to be singled out by her teachers and peers for her hard work and academic success as early as the third grade and began to believe in herself, she began to shake the useless sixth child feeling. One of the reasons for this and other achievements Hart experienced while she was in school was the training she was receiving from her father:

> Mrs. Frances, my third-grade teacher, let the class vote on who should get the "Honor Pin" for being the best student in the class. They nominated and voted for me. It was the first time I had been singled out as a good student. Mrs. Winters, my fourth grade teacher, had the reputation of being the meanest teacher in the school….I was afraid of her reputation. She had an angular body with sharp edges, a pointy nose, and corners for shoulders. But I had been taught by my father how to be around mean people. I decided to work hard, lay low, and be quiet. This worked, and she liked me right away. I never raised my hand, speaking only when I was called on. And I usually knew the answer. (141)

Hart studied hard throughout her school years. One of the biggest dreams of her childhood was getting a college education, and because she was so good at math and other subjects she was enrolled in classes that were the correct prerequisites for college entrance. When she was in the fourth grade, the valedictorian of the local high school was a Mexican American girl. This was the first time this honor was given to students of Hispanic descent. It had a large impact on Hart:

> The only thing I remembered from her speech was that she said she was going to college at the University of Texas. I sat there in my chair in my blue chiffon dress…I had gotten both the honor pins, both in the third and in the fourth grade. Maybe I could go to college too. That would be the biggest turning point of all. (151)

She was serious about reaching her goal to go to college. She did what she needed to do in order to make it happen in her life:

> All through high school, I had doggedly worked to get myself ready for college. I took two years of Spanish! That was because it was the only foreign language offered and I knew any college I applied to would have a foreign language requirement. I felt so silly repeating trivial phrases after the teacher, but I did it. I took all the math and science offered. My friend Ninfa was already at the University of Texas, and she guided me through the application process. I used my summer money to buy a portable manual typewriter to type my essays and my financial aid applications. (206)

Hart attended the University of Texas in Austin and after graduation she was offered three jobs. She accepted a job with Control Data Corporation, after being flown to California for the final interview. Flying on this plane provided her with a glimpse into success in the mainstream culture of the United States:

> They had a long black limousine waiting for me at the San Francisco airport to take me to Sunnyvale. The voices in my head told me that I had finally arrived. My gut said that I was in way over my head. The two sides fought inside me all the way to Sunnyvale while I sat alone in the back of that long black limo. It was my first taste of the seductions of corporate life. It went to my head. (229)

Eventually, Hart joined the workforce of professional white-collar workers at IBM. This job took over her life and left her feeling empty on the inside:

> I was awash in money and sales awards. I went shopping for a Mercedes and joined the poshest health club I could find. Located in Los Colinas (Dallas), it had both an indoor and outdoor running track. It had two golf courses and was expanding to four….We women had our own exercise machines, steam room, sauna, and whirlpool. There were two huge, fluffy white towels and a new pink razor waiting for me when I stepped into the shower that had three dispensers

> for gel soap, shampoo, and conditioner. When I came out of the shower, I wrapped my hair in one towel and my body in the other. If I trailed a few drops of water on my way to the mirrored make-up area, a female attendant walked behind me cleaning it up….When I sat down at the mirror, she offered to massage lotion into my neck and shoulders. I let her—awash in guilt now—suddenly identifying her with her station. I decided to leave her a big tip. (230)

During the IBM years, Hart lived her life in and out of different suitcases, cities, and airplanes. On one of the plane rides, she had an epiphany that lead her to make changes in her life:

> Four years later I was in the window seat of a DC-10 hurtling toward New York. I got to sit in first class because I had half a million miles on my frequent flier number. I had packed in half an hour at four that morning. It was the fourth day that week that I'd been on an airplane. My life was not my own. It belonged to IBM. I was no better off than my parents. In several days, I made what my family together made in a migrant season. But, like them, I had no time. (231)

Hart described the epiphany in this quote, "I recognized that my life had become like fathers was during the migrant years. I was traveling in circles on a regular basis to make a living."[64] The stresses of her life at IBM began to weigh heavily on her: "My life didn't leave much time or energy for anything. I gave my heart and soul to IBM. They gave me money in return. But my soul was shriveling."[65] She was also feeling very alone, and this is when she began to write: "In my low moments I wondered what I was doing. In the silence, pure and simple, the answer came: I needed to integrate my

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[64] "Elva Trevino Hart-Author of Barefoot Heart," YouTube video, 1.04, a special lecture on February 22, 2013, posted by WIPPS, posted on April 5, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=- V9ht-FG1hlo.

[65]Elva Trevino Hart, *Barefoot Heart: Stories of a Migrant Child*, (Tempe: Bilingual Press, 1999), 231.

childhood Mexican side back into myself."[66] And in writing her life story, that is exactly what she did.

[66] Ibid. 235.

Discussion

Analysis of the four memoirs showed that while there are some common patterns among the lives of the four women, their paths into mainline society were quite distinctive. Each of the women struggled to move beyond the circumstances into which she was born. In this chapter the general commonalities shared by these women's life experiences will be discussed followed by the uniqueness of each life path.

Patterns of Commonality

While growing up, all four women were cognizant of the low socio/economic status of their families, and the limited opportunities for upward mobility that were available to their parents and the children born in these families and all families of color living in poverty. They responded by working hard and challenging the discriminatory policies and practices that were in place at their communities, and by using talent and determination to move beyond the limitations of each family's sociocultural environment. Eventually, they all came to the realization that they had to leave the world of their families behind. And, so they did.

From the early age of fifteen, Anne Moody knew she had to get out of Centreville:

> "Yes, that's it,"I thought still lying there. "This year I'll take piano lessons; I'll join the band and play basketball again. I will keep busy from sunup to sundown. Then I won't have to think about…Emmett Till…No, I won't even have to talk to Mama them or get uptight when Raymond stares at me all the time, because from now on , I'll spend as little time in this house as possible….And, as soon as I finish high school, I am gonna leave Centreville for good. (145)

As Hughes was growing up, she began to see a pattern of male force and aggression toward females. She commented on some of the hard lessons she learned while watching her siblings grow up: "I curiously but sadly watched the mistakes of my three half-sisters and half- brother….Those mistakes were among the ones that I had to avoid if I was going to break into the culture of advancement within America, and I knew it wasn't going to be easy."[67] She was right, but after all she had witnessed as a child she knew she had to find a way to get out.

Linda Hogan was twelve years old when she realized she was going to leave her family during their boat trip from Germany back to the United States: "This journey was the first reckoning, the first knowledge I felt of a woman's body and spirit…. In the middle of the sea, and for the first time in my memory, I felt inside myself a cellular aliveness. It was a freedom. I felt whole, alone, unafraid, a bodily joy…." [68]

In her memoir, Elva Trevino Hart's recalls the bitter sweet moment when she realized she had to leave the world in which she grew up in order for her to achieve her goals because her parents and the community expected her to marry a local and become, "a mamacita, a comadre, a tia [but] I had to sever all ties and try my own wings—alone."[69]

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[67] Grace Flores-Hughes. *A Tale of Survival: Memoir of an Hispanic Woman,* (Bloomington: Author House, 2011), 46.

[68] Linda Hogan, *The Woman Who Watches Over the World, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company,* 2001), 40.

[69] Elva Trevino Hart, *Barefoot Heart: Stories of a Migrant Child.* (Tempe: Bilingual Press, 1999), 207.

Other Commonalities

All of the women were born during the decade of the 1940s. Anne Moody was born on September 15, 1940, and she came from a family with a history of slavery. In many ways they were still suffering from slavery. The other three women were born after World War II, when the nation was trying to return to a more stable post war American society. On June 11, 1946, Grace Flores Hughes was born in Taft, Texas, into a poor Hispanic family that spoke broken English mixed with Spanish. Linda Hogan was born on July 16, 1947 to a father who was Native American and a mother who was white. Elva Trevino Hart does not know the actual day on which she was born; she only knows the year which was 1949. She was the sixth child in a family of migrant workers.

Finally, they all authored memoirs. In the tradition of writers such as Lionnet and Angelou, each made a point of telling her truth. Soujourner Truth noted, "Truth is powerful, and it prevails."[70] African American activist Audre Lorde claimed , "I have come to believe over and over again that is what is most important to me must be spoken, made verbal and shared, even at the risk of having it bruised or misunderstood. That speaking profits me, beyond any other effect."[71]

All four women lived with fear—a common theme in each of the memoirs, and they balanced it with determination as they sought ways out of their impoverished begin-

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[70] Sojourner Truth, "Activist, Civil Rights Activist, Women's Rights Activist," *Biography.com,* last modified April 11, 2017, http://www.biography.com/people/sojourner-truth-9511284.

[71] Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider,* (Trumansberg: Crossing Press, 1984), 71.

nings. Moody pushed her way through it to become an important voice for civil rights. Hughes observed her older brothers and sisters and learned from their mistakes. Hogan's fear of isolation and rejection from her mother dissipated as she found and embraced her Native American roots. Once their fears were confronted determination took over as each forged her way out of the world into her chosen professional career path. Also, each of these women was drawn to different aspects of mainstream culture as they individualized their adult life experiences. The discussion will focus on individualized experiences and personal responses to their life circumstances.

The Uniqueness of Their Life Paths

Anne Moody and Civil Rights

A. Early Circumstances

Anne Moody was born into a family of sharecroppers who worked on a Mississippi plantation. It had not changed much from the days when slavery was practiced:

> I'm still haunted by dreams of the times we lived on Mr. Carter's plantation. Lots of Negros lived on his place…We all lived in rotten wood two room shacks. But ours stood out from the others because it was up on the hill with Mr. Carter's big white house, overlooking the farms and the other shacks below...We rarely saw Mama and Daddy because they were in the field every day except Sunday. They would get up early in the morning and leave the house just before daylight. It was six o'clock in the evening before they returned. (11)

B. Pivotal Moment

When she was twelve years old, Moody began to be successful in junior high, both in academics, and in playing basketball. During that time period there was a horrible

racist incident in Mississippi that shook her. Emmett Till, a fourteen year old African American boy was murdered. He was visiting Mississippi from Chicago, and was accused of whistling at a white woman. Thus, he was lynched. This incident had a profound effect on Moody:

> I was fifteen years old when I began to hate people. I hated the white men who murdered Emmett Till and I hated all the other whites who were responsible for the countless murders Mrs. Rice [her teacher] had told me about and those I vaguely remembered from childhood. But I also hated Negroes. I hated them for not standing up and doing something about the murders. In fact, I think I had a stronger resentment toward Negroes for letting whites kill them than toward the whites. Anyway, it was at this stage in my life that I began to look upon Negro men as cowards. I could not respect them for smiling in a white man's face, addressing him as Mr. So—and—So, saying yessuh and nossuh when after they were home behind closed doors that same white man was a son of a bitch, a bastard, or any other name more suitable than mister. (129)

Moody's teacher, Mrs. Rice counseled and advised her not to dwell on all of the violence and negative things that had been going on in the Negro community. She suggested to her that busying herself with basketball and other activities would help her keep her mind off of those things. Moody took her advice during her high school years and she focused on her academic studies and basketball while in high school.

When she was sixteen years old, Moody was reunited with her father for the first time in eight years. She ended up moving in with him because her stepfather, Raymond, had become inappropriately interested in her; her high school basketball coach, who was white, was interested in her in a predatory way as well. Both situations terrified Moody, so she moved in with her father who lived in Woodville, Mississippi.

There was a brand new high school in Woodville, Johnson High School, which was an all-black school. Moody finished high school there and graduated in 1959.[72]

C. Path Out of Original Circumstances

Hard work paid off for Moody, as she received a basketball scholarship from Natchez College in Natchez, Mississippi. Unfortunately, her first year there was not a good experience. She felt that she did not fit in and considered dropping out the next year. However, during the summer, while working in New Orleans as a waitress, she realized that if she wanted to continue with her college education, Natchez was he only choice: "By the time the school term ended, I was so sick of Natchez that I was sure I wouldn't return the following year. But the schools in New Orleans cost just too much money, so a few weeks before the new term, I decided to go back."[73]

Not long after her return to Natchez, Moody discovered a set of character strengths that would become a dominant part of her personality in her future work: integrity, courageousness, and determination. It all started when she found a maggot in her grits. She called for a boycott against eating in the cafeteria maggot infested food in the school cafeteria:

> "O.K.," I said. "We don't eat until he [the president of the college] gets rid of Mrs. Harris…We were just outside the dining room door and a couple of guys stormed back inside, hollering, "Boycott! Boycott!" One of them started yelling, "Maggots in the grits, maggots in the grits! We ain't gonna eat this cooked up shit!" Then students began to walk out leaving their plates on the ta-

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[72] Anne Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi: The Classic Autobiography of Growing Up Poor in the Rural Black South,* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1968), 211.

[73] Ibid. 228.

> bles right where they were. (Usually we were required to empty our own trays.) Then we all gathered in front of the dorm….(235)

D. Stresses of Engagement with the Dominate Culture

After she finished her two year stint at Natchez, Moody received an academic scholarship to Tougaloo College a four year historically black, private, liberal arts school. During this time, she joined the NAACP at the encouragement of a friend who was the chapter secretary:

> I promised her that I would go to the next meeting. All that night I didn't sleep. Everything started coming back to me. I thought of Samuel O' Quinn. I thought of how he had been shot in the back with a shotgun because they suspected him of being a member. I thought of Reverend Dupree and his family who had been run out of Woodville when I was a senior in high school, and all he had done was to get up and mention NAACP in a sermon. The more I remembered the killings, beatings, and intimidations, the more I worried what might possibly be happen to me or my family if I joined the NAACP. But I knew I was going to join, anyway. I had wanted to for a long time. (248)

On May 28, 1963, Moody and other members of the NAACP chapter participated in the Woolworth lunch counter sit-in on May 28, 1963:

> We kept our eyes straight forward and did not look at the crowd except for occasional glances to see what was going on. All of a sudden I saw a face I remembered—the drunkard from the bus station sit-in. My eyes lingered on him just long enough for us to recognize each other….He took out a knife, opened it, put it in his pocket and began to pace the floor….A man rush forward, threw Memphis from his seat, and slapped my face. Then another man who worked in the store threw me against an adjoining counter. (264-7)

. Upon graduating from college, Moody traveled to Canton, Mississippi, to continue her work with the Civil Rights Movement, and discovered just how deeply racism and violence were embedded in Southern culture. In a 1985 interview with Debra Spencer, Moody discussed the effects of the violence and trauma she experienced growing up in Mississippi:

> I got on a bus in Jackson, Mississippi; that bus was headed for Washington, D. C. I ran away from Canton when a kid had gotten his brains splattered all over the church grounds down in Canton…When I saw that bus going to Washington and I yelled up there to Bob Moses where it was going, and I was just gittin', no suitcase, no clothes, not a toothbrush, nothing! I just ran and got in it and sat down. And I was in Washington without anything but what I had on my back and shoes on my feet.[74]

It was 1964, when she got off that bus, she testified in senate hearings regarding the violence and racist incidents she had both watched and experienced. After her testimony, Moody moved to New York and worked at Cornell University as Civil Rights Project Coordinator. During this time, she wrote *Coming of Age in Mississippi*, and the book was published in 1968. Writing her story became her form of activism. In an article published by *The New York Times* upon her death, Moody was quoted as saying, "In the beginning I never saw myself as a writer….I was first and foremost an activist in the civil rights movement in Mississippi." [75] The memoir led to the city of Berlin, Germany offering her a scholarship to continue her work on civil rights in the United States. She lived there for two years, from 1972-1974.

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[74] Anne Moody, interview by Debra Spencer, *Oral History Project 403,* AU 76, February 26, 2018. 41.

[75] Margalit Fox, "Anne Moody, Author of 'Coming of Age in Mississippi,' Dies at 74," *New York Times*, February 17, 2015.

In an interview towards the end of her life, Moody discussed the toll that her work in the movement took on her. "You don't know the effect that it has on you mentally. It wears; it tears at the root of your heart."[76] After spending most of her adult life working for civil rights, Moody became disenchanted with the movement: "I came to see through my writing that no matter how hard we in the movement worked, nothing seemed to change." She added, "We were like an angry dog on a leash that had turned on its master. It could bark and howl and snap, and sometimes even bite, but the master was always in control."[77]

E. How She Ended Up

By the 1990's, she was disillusioned with the movement, in the early 1990's she returned with her son Sasha to her family in Mississippi. She must have realized that the movement had done little to improve the lives of southern black families who still struggled with voting rights and other social economic inequities related to segregation. She wrote another book and this time it was about her mother, Toosweet. However, it was never published. She died in the home she shared with her sister, Adline and her son Sasha on February 15, 2015.

Grace Flores-Hughes and Civil Service

A. Early Circumstances

At an early age, Hughes became very aware of her and her family's place in Taft, Texas. In her book, Hughes commented that it was common to see signs that read,

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[76]Anne Moody, interview by Debra Spencer, *Oral History Project 403,* AU 76, February 26, 2018. 23.

[77]Margalit Fox, "Anne Moody, Author of 'Coming of Age in Mississippi,' Dies at 74," *New York Times*, February 17, 2015.

"Niggers, Wetbacks, and dogs aren't welcome."[78] Also, Hughes was traumatized by the violence she saw as a child:

> Another son, [a neighbor] performed for all of West Pecan Street. He got drunk just about every Friday night and he beat his wife in the process. He'd hit her with his fists as if he was fighting another man, except his wife didn't strike back. He dragged his wife up and down West Pecan Street by her hair, while bobby pins flew in every direction. By the end of the beating, his wife's blue chenille housecoat was covered in blood, as were her face and hair. "*Ayayay! Ayayay! Ayeee!"* his young wife screamed. But no one on our street came to rescue her: not her in-laws, with whom she lived, and not her own parents, who lived nearby. (103)

Fear of being stuck in Taft, along with steely determination, were driving forces that helped Hughes step outside of that world.

B. Pivotal Moment

Her first years in elementary school were hard as she dealt with racism that was directed towards her personally. Like many high schools at that time, Taft grouped their students into tracks for those who were college bound and those who weren't. The lines were drawn around race and ethnicities, and Hughes learned her fate the hard way:

> As I prepared to graduate from high school I found myself in such an untenable situation that I feared my road out of Taft was blocked forever. During my freshman year, I had enrolled in what the school called a non-college program. The non-college program was nothing more than a quick method to get Mexican Americans through and out of school. The school officials sold it as an alternative. To what? I remember a school official saying, 'You can always switch to the college program if you change your mind about going to college.' But in my junior year a classmate helped me to understand what I'd gotten myself into when she warned me that I was going to be lucky to land a job mopping floors at the Piggly Wiggly if I remained in the non-college program. (187-8)

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[78] Grace Flores Hughes, *A Tale of Survival: Memoir of an Hispanic Woman,* (Bloomington: Authorhouse, 2011), 25.

The very thought of being stuck in Taft terrified Hughes. She talked with the school counselors and the principal of the school and they were unwilling to help her in any way, but it only made her more determined to go to college. Hughes found a college that would accept her: Durham Business College in San Antonio, Texas. She finished the program and was hired into a civil service job at Kelly Air Force Base in San Antonio.

C. Path Out of Original Circumstances

She started out as a GS-2 clerk typist and within a year she was promoted and transferred to Washington D. C. to work at the Pentagon. This was her ticket out of Texas and she moved to D. C. as quickly as she could. In her memoir, Hughes reflected on that time in her life and the friends she made during her time at Durham:

> At Durham College I had made many friends. I wished that any one of them would accompany me to Washington D. C. But the controlled world they came from wasn't going to allow them to travel anywhere after graduation except back to their home towns where most were expected to find work to help support their families. My friends were bright women who had the ability to achieve just about anything they set their minds to…That was one part of our Mexican Culture I had a difficult time understanding and accepting. Ama never put that kind of demand on me. (200)

Within a year of working in civil service, Hughes was transferred to the Pentagon. It was a very exciting prospect to her:

> The day to leave San Antonio came soon enough. My dream to travel to a place far away from Taft was about to come true….Yet, I was more than aware of the risks that lay ahead. I didn't know anyone in Washington, D. C., and new even less about the culture and temperament of my new surroundings. Nonetheless,

> my excitement couldn't be contained. I was ready to start a new life and vowed not to look back. (206)

Continuing to pursue higher education became a goal that helped her climb:

> In the summer of 1979 I left the department to work on my master's degree at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. Two years earlier I had graduated from the University of the District of Columbia where I earned a Bachelor of Arts degree of Psychology through the Upward Mobility Program….The Harvard master's program for which I was selected was primarily designed for up and coming mid and high-level civil servants throughout the federal government. (230)

D. Stresses of Engagement with Dominant Culture

Back at the Pentagon, after Harvard, Hughes moved up the ranks quickly and became involved in politics. She felt she was finally in a place where her color and ethnicity were less important, but she had to survive the Pentagon culture of rank domination. For example, she noted that Dr. Henry Kissinger verbally abused and shouted at the people who had the misfortune to come into contact with him, and that still made her fearful of making mistakes when she was transposing his Vietnam notes and those of other high ranking military officials.

She felt used and invisible. "I spent every waking hour at the Pentagon and didn't so much as have a thought that anyone noticed the long hours I worked, never mind the enormous stress I endured."[79] She suffered from working in a military culture that devalued women no matter how successful they were. While she supported local feminist groups, she had her reservations about the feminist movement as a whole:

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[79] Ibid. 217.

> While I learned much from my feminist associates and friends, I didn't get caught up in the feminist movement for two reasons. I saw the movement as being led by well to do Anglo women whose lives had been based on more privilege than poverty. They could reach their goals as Anglo women a lot easier than those of us still struggling with our ethnic heritage. Add to that our class status and we faced a serious challenge making our way up America's ladder of success….If we are going to say we support every woman's right then that's exactly what we should do, regardless of faith, color or political persuasion. (242)

In 1987, President Regan announced her appointment to the Community Relations Service/Department of Justice (CRS) in the Rose Garden at the White House. She called that moment the pinnacle of her success. But, true to her style of writing and the honesty of her voice, she also called it the presidential appointment from hell:

> CRS was becoming the appointment from hell. I was called more than once by the Democratic staff of the Judiciary Committee for interviews about my qualifications. It seemed they were listening to my detractors from CRS. It was becoming clearer and clearer by the day that the deputy at CRS wanted my job and was doing all he could to derail my nomination….I figured in their own tacit way they were supporting the deputy and in essence purposely fueling the flames of his acrimonious actions and those of his two cronies against my nomination. (264)

E. How She Ended Up

The determination and perseverance Hughes developed as a child were very useful traits. She became accepted and successful in the dominate culture. She did gain that political position in President Reagan's cabinet and in the cabinets of both Bush presidents before she retired. After that, she volunteered in the Republican Party. She is currently married to a retired four star general named Harley and they have an adopted son, Christian. She has only been back to Taft, Texas a few times since she left it to go

to college. She and her husband live in Washington, D.C., where she celebrated her seventieth birthday in July, 2017.

Linda Hogan and the Chickasaw Culture

A. Early Circumstances

Linda Hogan was born into a biracial family, and it directly affected her identity; her father was Chickasaw, but her mother was white. Her father had enlisted in the army as a soldier who went on to earn the rank of sergeant. He was eventually given a medical discharge from the army because of heart disease. She describes him in the third chapter of her book, entitled "Falling:"

> My father, who has a beautiful and content spirit, recently told me and a friend that I was one of the reasons he quit drinking. One night, when he was drunk and I was a baby, he was bouncing me on the bed and I fell to the floor, hitting my head. I cried for so long, he couldn't comfort me. He went to the icebox to get me some food and the only thing in it, he says, was Jim Beam. Sometime after that he was in the hospital for a year with cirrhosis. A year is a very long time, then, a far cry from the man who met my lovely mother, a handsome Indian man in a pinstripe suit who bowed to her so formally and asked her to dance. They won a jitterbug contest without even knowing it was a contest. (51-2)

Hogan's mother was the more mysterious figure of her two parents. She was young while Hogan was growing up and alone most of the time because her father's military career frequently kept him away from home. As a child she would watch her in attempts to figure out who she was:

> I hid beneath tables and watched her. I concealed myself in corners and looked out, trying to know her….My mother had no claim, even to herself. I think she was a victim of brain chemistry in a time when there were no medications. She wanted to be invisible, inaudible, She was fearful. Every person's sight that

> rested on her was one of danger or judgment….Perhaps it is the sad story of that generation, before medications, before the talking cure was widespread. There was a great silence around her, of what I think to be her own history, perhaps of abuse or injury, contained in her skin. Whatever it was, she was wounded, and because of the times, did not, could not, heal. (94-5)

As a young woman, her biracial status had a weighty impact on Hogan and the way she viewed her life:

> As a girl I was like clay still unfired by time and life and thought, unconscious even of myself….I had already been living in a world of betweens. Not just between cultures, as a mixed blood girl, and times, but in other ways, too. I'd existed in a middle world between girlhood and womanhood. It wasn't limbo. It was a life more empty than that….Perhaps "between" was, is, at the root of my very existence. (34)

As a child and a young adult, Hogan adopted the same loyalties and emotional sensitivities of her paternal grandparents, and this was made easier by the fact that American culture was not kind or welcoming to her: "All I know is that my life never fully existed in the other, mainstream, America."[80] Like other Native American people, she felt very connected to the land, and their stories were very important to her. She quoted Kiowa writer, N. Scott Momady, who said "We are made of words."[81]

Hogan embraced her Native American culture and drew strength and comfort from it. She wanted to live a life like her grandmother when she became older.[82] She ad-

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[80]Linda Hogan, *The Woman Who Watches Over the World*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), 21.

[81] Ibid. 21.

[82] Her grandmother had been forced to attend Bloomfield Academy-a boarding school for Native American girls to learn American culture.

mired her grandmother's beautiful spirit and the strength and grace that she brought to a harsh world, while holding the fragments of an Indian way. She rejected what Hogan called the American ways until her death, and her courage, strength, and conviction influenced her young granddaughter who wanted to be just like her.

B. Pivotal Moment

Her father was stationed in Germany until Hogan was fifteen. After that post the family traveled back to the United States by boat. The long journey home was a life changing and very freeing experience for her.

> Soon, everyone but me was sick, my mother, father, and brother were unable to get up from their bunks….And so, while they remained isolated and sick in the dark cabin of the sea vessel, I was given freedom….In the dark gray coat Robert {her boyfriend in Germany} had bought me, I stood on the deck and watched the water and sky. I watched the occasional spumes of whales in the distance, and felt the cold spray on my nose, my hair thick with dampness, when I stood outside for hours watching the lead-gray water….I watched people, made a friend, smoked her cigarettes….In the middle of the sea, and for the first time in my memory, I felt inside a cellular aliveness. It was a freedom….Even rocked by the ocean, it was as if I'd been water all along and had finally reached sea level and could rest in myself, floating there in the middle of the sea. (37-8)

C. Path Out of Original Circumstances

At the age of fifteen, Hogan entered the world of work and this gave her some freedom along with more control over her life. "I was fifteen and had just returned from Germany. I worked full time as a nurse's aide in a nursing home….After I had begun to work and could afford it, I took up skating….From my little area on the ice I watched Peggy Fleming skate her near perfect 8's."[83]

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[83] Ibid. 145-46.

Hogan did not attend the University of Colorado, Denver until she was in her late twenties, and she went on to earn an M. A. from the University of Colorado, Boulder, in 1978. She began writing plays, poetry, fiction, as well as non-fiction that were rooted in her Chickasaw heritage. Her literary accomplishments were successfully recognized the dominate culture even though they expressed Native American ways. In the following quote, Hogan explains an illuminating realization she had that served as an impetus to get an education and become a writer.

> Words, I see now, are the defining shape of a human spirit. Without them, we fall. Without them, there is no accounting for the human place in the world. Language is an intimacy not only with others, but even with the self. It creates a person. Without it, in the dawn, in the dark of night, there is no way to know who or what we are. One day the words came. I was an adult. I went to school after work. I read. I wrote. Words came, anchored to the earth, to matter, to the wholeness of nature. There was, in this, a fall this time to a holy ground of a different order, a present magic, a light bearing, soul saving presence that illuminated my heart and mind and altered my destiny. Without it, who would guess what, as a human being, I would have become. (56-7)

D. Stresses of Engagement with the Dominate Culture

Linda began going to a native AA when she was thirty –two years old. She had gotten married and family life was unraveling largely due to her alcoholism. During the AA meetings, she heard stories of other people's lives that were similar to her own struggles; this knowledge deepened her understanding of the hardships of life. "That was when I first began to know, really know that history, like geography, lives in the body and it is marrow—deep. History is our illness. It is recorded there, laid down

along the tracks and pathways and synapses. I was only one of the fallen in a lineage of fallen worlds and people."[84]

Through her writings, Linda described the planet and its inhabitants as being broken. Her healing began when she realized that a symbiosis of the two must occur: "Our healing was connected to this other healing, of woman to land, and bird to water. We are together in this, all of us, and it's our job to love each other, human, animal, and land, the way the ocean loves the shore, and shore loves and needs the ocean, even if they are different elements."[85]

Hogan learned from other experiences too. She loved horses and became involved with them when she was an adult. One horse in particular was a horse that was given to her by a man who boarded his horse on her land. She was fifty-two when he came into her life and she named him Big Red Horse. He threw her one day while riding him and that changed her life forever.

> Three weeks later I woke up and found myself in another ambulance as I was being transferred, the second time from one hospital to another. And here, I thought I was awake. I thought I was steadfastly anchored in time once again, leaving the shadow world partly behind, still wondering what happened, if I'd been a car accident….Over and over again I asked what had happened to me. For over two years there was short term memory loss as events failed to lay themselves down in the brain. Even now, I forget last week, last month. (164)

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[84] Ibid. 59.

[85] Ibid. 29.

Then, when she was in San Mateo, Mexico, vacationing with a friend, Hogan bought clay figurine that was made in the shape of a woman. The doll's name was The Woman Who Watches Over The World. Her journey in writing her memoir began when she spotted this woman:

> I remember the first time I saw the clay woman….The clay woman from San Martin, Mexico, was full and beautiful. Attached to the earth, she flew over it….Her name was written on a tag, "The Bruja Who Watches Over the Earth." Bruja is the Spanish word for a woman healer, soothsayer, or sometimes witch. I loved this flying soothsayer who protected the lands beneath her…I bought the clay woman and asked the clerk to mail her to me, then I returned home, anticipating the day The Woman Who Watches Over the World would appear. When she arrived, she wasn't whole….The woman who watches over the world was broken….At first I was disappointed, but then I thought, Yes, the woman who watches over us is as broken as the land, as hurt as the flesh of people. She is a true representation of the world she flies above. Something between us and earth is broken. (17-8)

These two experiences were epiphanies for Hogan. She gained a deeper understanding of life and found an acceptance of the brokenness of the world.

E. How She Ended Up

Linda Hogan became a very successful writer and published her memoir, *The Woman Who Watches Over the World* in 2001. Some of her noteworthy accomplishments are: Finalist, Pulitzer Prize for Literature, 1990; Guggenheim Fellow, 1991; and inducted into the Chickasaw Hall of Fame in 2007. Today she lives in Oklahoma where she teaches and writes as the Chickasaw Nation's Writer in Residence. She is also on the faculties of the University of Colorado and Oklahoma.

Elva Trevino Hart and the Corporate World

A. Early Circumstances

Elva Trevino Hart was the sixth child born into a poor Mexican American family in living in Pearsall, Texas. She describes the beginning of a lonely childhood in the following quote:

> As for me, my mother was embarrassed when I was born. I was living proof she still let my father part her legs. She wanted the world to think that she was done with babies and sex. Rudy was already seven years old. My mother was forty-five and my father was fifty when I was conceived. My mother hoped fervently that her lack of periods was due to menopause. But it wasn't. It was me. She didn't tell anyone. She hid me under floppy house dresses, sweaters, aprons, and continual plumpness. Ama is a good liar. When she brought me home from the hospital, my five siblings were shocked. (72)

Hart was just four years old when her life took this major turn. The migrant circuit was the route that was taken by Mexican American workers every summer, so they could work on other people's farms and make money with which they would support their families. Since Hart's family was very poor, they had no car or other form of transportation to get them to Minnesota. They had to ride in the back of the truck of another migrant worker who was taking his family on the same circuit to work. This practice was especially hard on Hart's mother, who was traveling with her six children. "My mother was frantic. She was going to the other end of the world with six children and no way to get back for four or five months."[86]

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[86] Elva Trevino Hart, *Barefoot Heart: Stories of a Migrant Child.* (Tempe: Bilingual Press, 1999), 5.

Loneliness and isolation were two themes Hart wove into her life narrative. She felt like a shadow child. She expanded on her feelings during this time in her life with this passage. "I grew up with the vague feeling of being unwanted and wondering if anyone could love a child like me. I spent much time feeling as if I bothered everyone; the only time I was alright was when I was alone. And I was alone a lot."[87]

Finally, Hart found a place where she belonged when she started school. For her, school provided the safety and stability of a home where she could escape the confines of her Mexican American nomadic life as a share cropper's child. Hart was regarded by her teachers as a bright student who was very interested in learning (especially math) and who loved school. Like her parents she had a strong work ethic and was noticed by her teachers.

One of the biggest dreams of her childhood was getting a college education but being Mexican American her chances were slim. However, because she excelled in math and other subjects she ended up being enrolled in classes that were the correct prerequisites for college entrance. When she was in the fourth grade, the valedictorian of the local high school was a Mexican American girl. This was the first time this honor was given to students of Hispanic descent. It had a large impact on Hart.

> The only thing I remembered from her speech was that she said she was going to college at the University of Texas. I sat there in my chair in my blue chiffon dress…I had gotten both the honor pins, both in the third and in the fourth grade. Maybe I could go to college too. That would be the biggest turning point of all. (151)

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[87] Ibid. 73.

B. Pivotal Moment

In a speech she delivered at the University of Wisconsin in 2013, she discussed the obstacles she faced regarding that goal, and how she was able to get into the university:

> The guidance counselor at school wouldn't help the Mexicans, and so when I was in the fourth grade I went to my brother's graduation and I saw that the valedictorian that year was a Mexican girl and it was the first time a Mexican girl had been a valedictorian. And so I thought, 'Well they don't have any more money than we do. They had been migrant workers like us. They lived in the same kind of house we did and she was gonna go to college. And so I thought if she's gonna go to college, than I can too.' [88]

C. Path Out of Original Circumstances

Thus, she graduated as the valedictorian of her high school class when she was eighteen years old, and with the help of three other Mexican American girls who went to college on scholarships, she too was given an academic scholarship to the University of Texas, Austin. The following fall, 1968, she enrolled as a freshman and majored in math. Upon was her graduation she was offered three jobs. She took a position with Control Data Corporation in Sunnyvale, California, and she worked there until she was twenty-seven years old. Then, Hart made the decision to go to Stanford. She was accepted into a Ph.D. program, but quit after receiving her master's degree in 1978.

D. Stresses of Engagement with the Dominate Culture

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[88] "Elva Trevino Hart-Author of Barefoot Heart," YouTube video, 1.04, a special lecture on February 22, 2013, posted by WIPPS, posted on April 5, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=- V9ht-FG1hlo

At that time, she started working for IBM, making money, and traveling in a corporate jet. She had all the trappings of success but started she started to realize that her life was not her own anymore. “My life didn’t leave much time or energy for anything. I gave my heart and soul to IBM. They gave me money in return. But my soul was shriveling.”[89]

Hart was thirty-three years old when she reached the pinnacle of corporate success. But after devoting her energies to gain entrance into the corporate world, she realized she still felt empty and alone. While she was on a plane during one of her business trips for IBM, she came to the realization: “I recognized that my life had become like father’s was during the migrant years. I was traveling in circles on a regular basis to make a living.”[90] Only she was not sitting in the back of a pickup truck. Her life had the silver lining of corporate jets, limousines and expensive hotels with a salary to go with it. Hart was a solid member of the dominate culture, yet she was still wrestling with the gnawing feeling that she was insignificant and drifting like a share cropper, because she had lost her roots. Integrating her Mexican heritage became her next goal.

E. How She Ended Up

Much later, in a discussion at the University of Wisconsin, Hart claimed that writing the book was the genesis of her journey towards feeling significant. She has donated the proceeds of the book to a scholarship funds for Mexican American students. As she ended the discussion she said, “My first adulthood was about filling the whole that

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[89]Elva Trevino Hart, *Barefoot Heart: Stories of a Migrant Child.* (Tempe: Bilingual Press, 1999), 231.

[90] Ibid. 231.

poverty left. My second adulthood is about finding my life's purpose and living a life of service."[91]

Hart is sixty-eight years old now and lives in Virginia with her husband Louis W. Hart, Jr. She continues to write and accept public speaking engagements. Writing her book accomplished much more for her than bestowing on her the privilege of being a published author; it was the process through which she was made whole, bringing to her the realization that indeed she was somebody whose providing a service by giving back to students and young adults the knowledge that she learned as she struggled to find her place in the world.

F. Related Research

Even though Moody saw herself more as an activist than a writer, her memoir has had significant impact on keeping African American history alive. Meta Michond Cooper wrote about Anne Moody's book, *Coming of Age in Mississippi*, in her thesis for her MA. In her study she analyzed autobiography and critiqued how it is part of an African American autobiographical tradition. "African American literature emerged within the genre of autobiography dating back to slavery and post-slavery. As a result, the use of the personal story to provide social commentary has a long-standing tradition within African American history and literature."[92] However, she did not study Moody

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[91] "Elva Trevino Hart-Author of Barefoot Heart," YouTube video, 1.04, a special lecture on February 22, 2013, posted by WIPPS, posted on April 5, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=- V9ht-FG1hlo

[92] Meta Michond Cooper, "Anne Moody's "Coming of Age in Mississippi": Furnishing a Paradigm for Inquiry" (master's thesis, Howard University, 2009), 5.

for her individuality or unique character as an African American woman, nor did she isolate the memoir from the autobiographical tradition.

Michelle Johnson Vela is a Latina, who, like Hughes, wrote about the need find a place to both create and bring her voice. She also grew up in a community where that was not allowed, and where low expectations for Mexican American women were the norm. However, her dissertation focused on the contribution of Hispanic woman have made to the Euroamerican, white dominated field of memoir, "Whereas Euroamerican women's autobiographies tend to reflect a more individualized self-reflective voice, which often ignores issues pertaining to class and ethnicity, the life stories of women of color often portray a community oriented class consciousness, frequently conflicting with the author's desire for independence."[93] While it is an important work for understanding community oriented pressures on women of color, it does not focus on ways in which these women can move out of that culture.

Talking Back to History: Leanne Howe, Linda Hogan, and Louis Owen's Rewriting of the Southeastern Native Past Through Fiction," is the title of a master's thesis written by Kimberlee Kaitlyn Hodges. Hodges compares the writings of three Native American women as a way to re-appropriate the broken parts and fractured pasts in Native Cultures. She discusses how their writings illuminate the stories of history and Native American life in contemporary American society. However, she doesn't seek to connect this with more life stories of women from other minority cultures. And when it comes

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[93] Michelle Johnson Vela, "The Intersection of Gender, Class, and Ethnicity in the U.S.: Latina Life Writings" (PhD dissertation, Indiana University, 2001), vi.

to her treatment of Hogan, she is more interested in her literary works than her life's journey.[94]

Wendy Monique Arce studied how the Latino community was portrayed in film. Her dissertation looked at the intersectionality of film, religion, and sexuality in the Latino community. Instead of the classical notions of assimilation, Arce brought alternation theory into her discussion. Alternation theory allows Latina/os to shift seamlessly between groups, so that they can retain a connection with their community for support while adapting to other social units that exist in the United States, analysis of these women's memoirs and autobiographies were part of her study. Arce's logic for this theoretical switch is, "Latina/os require a supportive ethnic community because U.S. media has created a negative perception of Latina/os since the beginning of cinema."[95]

As I bring this chapter to its conclusion, I want to add the caveat that none of the sources that I used in this chapter to support my points did a comparative study of patterns and uniqueness like was done in this study.

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[94] Kimberlee Kaitlyn Hodges, "Talking Back to History: Leanne Howe, Linda Hogan, and Louis Owen's Rewriting of the Southeastern Native Past Through Fiction" (master's thesis, University of Mississippi, 2013).

[95] Wendy Monique Arce, "Reel Negotiations: Exploring the Relationship Between Film, Religion, and Sexuality in the Latino Community" (PhD dissertation, Graduate Theological Union, 2016), 250.

Conclusion

As I draw this dissertation to an end, I want to posit its central question again. How did each of the women in this study respond to her experiences growing up and how did she navigate a culture that included racism and sexism? This question has been the cornerstone of this dissertation. Careful analysis of the memoirs and lives of each participant in this study was done through the lens of the research question.

This research identified several themes that the four women shared. They include: Education, Professional Careers, and Characteristics They Showed as They Faced Setbacks and Road Blocks Along Their Chosen Paths. However, it became quite clear that each woman traveled her own path as she broke out of her social circumstances to find success and meaning in mainstream American culture. Not surprisingly, education was the preeminent bridge that each of the women used to cross into the dominate culture. Never the less, the educational opportunities available to them varied considerably and led to careers in different areas of society. They were willing to take risks, make choices with confidence, and to meet life's challenges with determination, intelligence, and courage.

Education

Anne Moody

Severely impoverished and growing up in the Jim Crow south, Anne Moody's family experienced the effects of racism directed at African American people in the rural south at that time. Instead letting it break her, Moody was toughened by it. Her close knit family depended on each other. Her mother helped and supported her and her sister, and Moody helped her mother by taking care of her younger sister when needed.

Moody's first experiences in becoming educated were difficult. The poor conditions of the school house she attended and the fear she felt from the teacher/minister's verbal and physical abuse did not stop her from becoming a good student. As she matured, she became successful in both sports and academics. Moody started playing basketball while she was in junior high school. She was also becoming a stronger student and achieving success in her studies. She gained confidence as a result of her accomplishments, both on the basketball court and in the classroom.

Moody ended up moving with her father who lived in Woodville, Mississippi. She attended a brand new high school in Woodville, Johnson High School, which was an all-black school. Moody finished high school there. She really wanted to go to college and was grateful when she was given a basketball scholarship at Natchez College. It was a two-year school in Natchez, Mississippi. From there, Moody received an academic scholarship to attend Tougaloo, a Historic Black College, and graduated with a bachelor's degree—the first member of her family to do so.

Grace Flores-Hughes

Grace Flores-Hughes faced with obstacles from her very first day of school. She learned to survive bullying and racism throughout her elementary and junior high school years, and when she realized that tracking practices limited her choices to go on to college, she faced the news with a fresh determination to do whatever was necessary in order to break the cycle of poverty and find social advancement. She discovered Durham Business School which gave her the skills to become part of a work force that existed beyond the borders of her Mexican community.

Hughes's passion for education never waned. She was working in Washington D. C. at the Pentagon when she took advantage of the Upward Mobility Program and earned a BA in psychology from the University of the District of Columbia. A few years later, she attended the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard and earned a master's degree.

Linda Hogan

Linda Hogan had access to a more typical middle-class education. Her father was in the military while she was growing up, so she went to schools in different cities or even countries at times, attending public schools in Denver, Colorado, and Germany, after which her father was medically discharged from the army.

She earned an undergraduate degree when she was in her twenties and earned an MFA in English and Creative Writing which would inform her work later on in life. Her education gave her the intellectual tools to pursue her talent as an artist of words.

Elva Trevino Hart

The academic talents of Elva Trevino Hart were recognized Education suited Hart and her strong intellect from the very beginning and she was sheltered from some of the racist practices that the other women faced. She excelled in most subjects, especially math and science and she graduated as Valedictorian of her senior class.

Realizing her dream of being Valedictorian opened a small circle of Mexican American women who had been successful in going to college. They helped her apply and fill out scholarship forms, and she attended and graduated from The University of Texas, Austin.

While she was working for a computer company in California, she decided to go back to school. She was accepted into the computer science PhD program at Stanford University and quit after earning a master's degree to accept a position with IBM which led her to positions which earned her prestige and a big salary.

Professional Careers

Anne Moody

Quite unwittingly, Anne Moody put herself on a path leading to her future profession when she called for the cafeteria boycott at Natchez College. Eventually, she became a full-time activist for the civil rights movement, and expressed her life's work in writing *Coming of Age in Mississippi.* It was a passionate form of vigorous action, as she used

the lens of an activist. When she toured with the book, she also spoke at rallies and other civil rights events.

Her main passion remained with her people. She had a sincere stake in trying to help them achieve the basic rights of any human being, and she worked tirelessly on their behalf. For much of Moody's life her commitment to their cause did come at a cost to Moody, and she left the movement. She worked with poor African American children in New York City before going into seclusion near her hometown in Mississippi.

Grace Flores-Hughes

Grace Flores-Hughes went from being a GS-2 clerk typist at Kelly Air Force base in San Antonio, Texas, to becoming a GS-3 level secretary at the Pentagon in just one year. Through her work at the Pentagon she was also able to work on behalf of her people, Mexican Americans. Albeit, it was more symbolic than actually facilitating positive change for them in the mainstream culture of the United States.

Her career at the Pentagon put her in contact with many of the most powerful people in the United States, and eventually she started working in the administrations of several presidents. Serving in the cabinet of President Ronald Reagan was to her, the pinnacle of her career in public service. Ironically, it was not a season in her life that she enjoyed. The ugly and backstabbing culture of those at the top in Washington D. C. took such a heavy toll on Hughes that she ended up calling it the appointment from hell. While she had found a place for herself in the culture of advancement in the United States, she still found herself in a place where people treated others badly, and where

sexism and male privilege was very prevalent. It was not unlike the culture in which she was born. It just had bigger and shinier houses.

Linda Hogan

Linda Hogan has had a fulfilling career as an artist, and her art allows her to express the culture of her people, the Chickasaws. She is also a woman who has been honored not only by her people, but by people in the mainstream culture of the United States. She has lived in her beloved home state of Oklahoma and teaches at the University of Oklahoma. Also, she is the poet in residence for the Chickasaw Nation which allows her to use her artistic talents to express native culture.

Elva Trevino Hart

Elva Trevino Hart's college education put her on a fast track to a lucrative business career. She took a job for Control Data Corporation, which at the time was a monstrous supercomputer firm located in Sunnyvale, California. A few years later she started working for IBM. Like her parents, Hart's work ethic was strong. She spent much of her time on the road and on airplanes, eventually earning a corporate salary. Yet, she lost touch with herself and found herself in a place in which she had lost touch with her roots.

She had an epiphany in the form of a dream where she equated her corporate travel with hers sharecropping father's work. After that she gave up the corporate life and became a full-time writer. At first, she just wrote stories from memories that would slow-

ly emerge into her consciousness. Eventually, she put them all together and penned her memoir. She speaks at different engagements and still writes.

Characteristics They Showed as They Faced Set Backs and Road Blocks Along Their Chosen Paths

In this part of the conclusion, I have chosen seven characteristics that informed the behavior and choices of each of the women as she faced the reality and challenges of how she got from day to day. They are:

1. Brave, Determined, and Willing to take risks
2. Intelligent, Clever and Shrewd
3. Ethical

Anne Moody

1. From the outset of her life, Anne Moody found herself at ground zero. She was regularly beaten by her cousin George, who was charged with the task of keeping Anne and her baby sister Adline while their parents worked in the fields during the day. He so resented this, so he took it out on Anne and her sister, sometimes even starving them. Telling her parents of his abuses came at the price of another beating when her parents left the next morning for the fields. She took it upon herself to try and protect both herself and infant sister. This is when she started developing the mindset and skills she

would need later in life when she worked in the civil rights movement. Bravery was an attribute that not only helped her to face injustice as a young girl, but to put in on a world stage as an adult.

Being willing to take risks was also another component of Moody's character that she developed in childhood as she navigated fathers, step-fathers, teachers, white women for whom she worked, and a culture that denied her the right to call herself human. As a civil rights worker, her work put her life at risk on a continual basis. Even as she saw her colleagues and mentors persecuted and murdered, she did not wither under the duress of such dreadful conditions. She spent the majority of her life facing forward and marching on in spite of the continual dangers she faced.

2. Moody was blessed with a strong intellect and as she progressed through school she became quite successful academically. She was bright and a fast learner. She was in line to graduate high school as the valedictorian, but because she changed high schools during her senior year, she was not allowed the honor.

Moody was very clever in how she approached problem solving at times. In one instance, when she called for the boycott of the cafeteria at Natchez College. The students that were involved in that action with her were afraid because they did not have any money with which to buy food. She came up with the idea of all of them pulling their money together and buying food for the whole group to

share until the boycott ended. That's what they did. Moody gave the most money. She had twenty dollars, and she was the first to put it into the fund.

3. Using good judgment helped Moody avoid the pit falls that many girls who are in high school and college fall into. She asked for advice from the wise and trusted people in her life, like teachers. She then followed their advice.

Grace Flores-Hughes

1. Grace Flores-Hughes grew up in a dangerous community. From the time she was a young child, she also witnessed violence and abuse. It came in a different form than Moody's. She saw her own people, Mexican Americans, hurt each other. Some of the worst incidents to which she was exposed involved the violence that was commonly practiced and accepted in the culture in which she grew up, with was the violence that men perpetrated against women. She bravely took it all in and became determined to have a different destiny than the women she watched as she was growing up.

   Hughes learned to stand up to power while she was growing up. It was a skill she would draw upon later in life. When she was in high school she took the risk of actually going to a racist principal to ask for his help to find a way to go to college; she also attempted this with a prejudiced school counselor, and she stood her ground with a bigoted librarian who tried to deny her the ability to check out a book on colleges.

2. Hughes's attempts to get help from school administrators regarding her desire to go to college fell flat. Undaunted by their refusals of aid, she looked to herself to find a way to go to college. She found out about Durham Business College on her own and called up the Dean of the school herself and got him to come to her house and discuss the possibility of going to his school with her and her mother. She got into Durham and that was a major stepping stone towards her goal of getting out of her hometown and the fate of many of her Mexican American friends, especially the girls.

When Hughes was working for powerful people in Washington D. C., her shrewd and clever mind helped her to traverse the shark filled waters that are American politics. Her determination and keen perceptions allowed her to serve in the cabinets of three Republican presidents and retire when she was finished with that part of her life. She left that life when she chose to leave, instead of being driven out like many of her peers.

3. Hughes had a high standard of morality all of her life. She watched as her siblings and friends made bad moral and ethical choices, and she saw the unfortunate consequences they paid for using such bad judgment. Early on she made the choice to keep herself and her reputation clean and tidy. It cost her boyfriends and friends, but in the end, she gained from following her moral and ethical code.

Having high ethical standards also helped when Hughes was working for powerful people in Washington D. C., her discerning mind helped her to traverse the shark filled waters that are American politics. Her determination and keen perceptions allowed her to serve in the cabinets of three Republican presidents and retire when she was finished with that part of her life. She left that life when she chose to leave, instead of being driven out like many of her peers.

Linda Hogan

1. Linda Hogan exhibited bravery when she wrote the truth about her life in her memoir. Writing the truth about the atrocities in her own life was paralleled with the horrors her people, the Chickasaws. In her memoir she discussed that self-talking was rare for Native women. But she chose to take on the subject of how her and her people have been silenced and speak their truth into a culture and world that enjoys living within the confines of mythologies instead of the light and freedom of the truth.

Linda Hogan is a woman who took risks in many different ways throughout her life. But, one of the biggest risks she took is when she chose to become a mother. She adopted to Lakota girls who had been thrown away and rejected. When they came to her, they were ensnared in their own worlds of silence and pain. Hogan risked much, even her own heart, to try to love them into existence in a world they had never known, one in which they were valued and had true worth.

2. Hogan used her pen as a form of advocating for her people. She wrote plays and even produced them to show the plight of her people. She used her writing in efforts to shine a light on needs and in attempts to help facilitate positive change for Native Americans in the United States.

She is a very educated woman. She has been able to overcome troubling times and events in her life and forge ahead. She has used her keen mind and mental gifts to elevate herself out of and beyond the circumstances of her youth. Her education helped her to become and artist, and her intelligence can be seen in her award winning poetic works.

3. Hogan became aware of the environment and the damage that people have done to it. She loves animals and cares for any that cross her path if they are in need of assistance. An example of her care for wild life can be found in her memoir. Her and a friend found an injured loon and cared for it and took it to a veterinarian that fixed a broken leg. Her ethical and moral stances regarding the environment are quite evident in her life and work in saving the planet and in preserving the Chickasaw culture.

Native Americans, especially Native American women, are one of the most subjugated and silenced groups of people in the United States. The oppression of her people is something about which Hogan is very passionate. She continues to keep their plight(s) front and center through her gifting as a writer and poet. Her talent with her pen has kept the voice of her people alive.

Elva Trevino Hart

1. Elva Trevino Hart is the youngest child in her family, which is often a very powerless position. Being a girl in a Mexican American family only compounded this reality in her life. Her father was definitely a traditional Mexican man, who was indeed the head of his family and household. Yet, Hart would go to him when she needed or wanted something. She overstepped her fear on one such occasion to ask him if she could play in the school band, which would require him to buy her a flute. Her bravery paid off when she went to her father with this request. He accompanied her to the school to sign up for the band and to the store to buy her a flute. She had to interpret for him in both situations. He only spoke Spanish.

   Hart was an obedient child and would put herself to doing whatever her mother or father asked of her. Sometimes they would require her to walk by herself to a store to purchase something that they needed, even though it wasn't necessarily safe for her to be out in their neighborhood alone. On one such occasion as she was walking home across some railroad tracks, she came across a drunk man. He exposed himself while attempting to grab her. She got away from him and was quite traumatized when she arrived home.

2. Hart was very bright as a child and that was noticed by her teachers. She was continually awarded the best student pin at the end of the school year while she was in grade school. She was a very clever young woman as well. She participated in the science fair during her seventh-grade year and won by cutting up

planarian worms and writing about how they regenerate. Her cleverness and quick mind with helped her earn many awards while she was matriculating through school.

When she grew up her bright mind took her all the way to entry into a computer science PhD at Stanford. It also informed her decision to become a full-time writer. Her gift of intelligence went beyond just her personal use; she used it to shine a light on a way of life for many Mexican Americans, traveling the migrant circuit for work.

3. Getting to the top of the ladder of corporate success was not something that came about by happenstance. Hart was committed in her determination to excel in that world. She learned early in life that as a woman, especially a woman of minority and ethnic status, she would have to use her brains to get ahead and to maintain that position once she made it into the culture of advancement in the United States. But she did so by working hard and not compromising her value system.

Hart stayed away from relationships that would compromise her morally or ethically. When she was working for IBM, she had an epiphany that she had turned her back on herself. It was her moral and ethical center that helped her to make the decision to leave life in the corporate world and go back to her roots by writing and lecturing to others who have grown up under circumstances similar to her own.

This dissertation has been driven by the central question: How did each of the women in this study respond to her experiences growing up and how did she learn to handle the racism and sexism treatment she experienced at home and in the socio/cultural communities in which each participated as older adults? Though their methods of response differed, at a young age, each woman in this study began to plot a path that would lead her out of the social order her family lived within, and they all succeeded in that goal, in very unique ways.

It is important to note that while each of the women critiqued in this study endured the racist and sexist practices that were a part of the dominate culture, they did not let those experiences define who they became. Also, the civil rights movement was supposed to bring more freedom and participation in American civil life. While jobs and education may have opened to people of color because of the legislation that came out of the administration of Lyndon B. Johnson, it did not have the same effect on each of the women's lives. Anne Moody worked hard and fought bravely for equal rights for African Americans while the movement was in full swing, but in the end her and her colleagues realized that the campaign largely failed to deliver on its promise of providing coequality for them. Sadly, the movement ended up providing little more than suffrage for poor African Americans like Moody's family.

While none of the other participants of this study gave credit to the movement for opening doors for them that most likely would have been closed in earlier decades, at least not in their memoirs, they all reaped the benefits of the time, energy and sacrifices

of the people who were fighting on the front lines during that historical time period to secure privileges for them, and many who would come after them. So, it is important to note that people tend to go over and paint this time in American history with broad brushstrokes. Consequently, the most important part of this chronology is by passed: the stories of the people who lived through it. This dissertation attempted to capture the essence of the struggle through the lens of each of these women's individual journeys.

As I bring this study to an end, I want to include a quote from African American writer, Alice Walker. It exemplifies the significance of the women's memoirs that are analyzed in this dissertation. In speaking about the importance of women of color writing their life stories Walker commented, "Consulting, as belatedly discovered models, those writers—most of whom, not surprisingly are women-who discovered that their experience as ordinary human beings was also valuable and in danger of being misrepresented, distorted, or lost."[96]

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[96] Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens: Womanist Prose,* (New York: Harcourt Inc. 1983), 13.

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Appendix

Selected Literature Review

This literature review is divided into three categories. They are specifically life writing as a form of resistance, life writing as a way to reclaim something that was lost, and/or taken from a group or individual, and life writing as a method of reconstructing a life narrative to reform their lost identity. The writings and publications that are included in this list have been placed into the grouping that most accurately describes the main theme and/or findings in these research accounts of lives.

For the purposes of this dissertation, I have grouped this selected literature review and have the first category designated as resistance, and the second category designated as reclaiming, and the third category designated as reconstruction.

The literature review in this section is defined as the act of withstanding, striving against, or opposing life experiences that seem to run counter to an individual's identity.

Resistance:

Jennifer Jensen Wallach wrote a dissertation that analyzed both memoir and autobiography. She examined how both genres of life writing can be used as instruments of historical understanding. Her dissertation was entitled, "Remembering Jim Crow: The Literary Memoir as Historical Source Material." She defended the importance of life writing as a form of social critique, "The first section is a methodological examination of how memoirs can be used as instruments of historical understanding. The second part applies this methodology to a body of memoirs written about life in the Jim Crow south. Because state sanctioned racism was the defining characteristic of Jim Crow, I have concentrated my analysis

on the memoirists' depictions of race relations and the mechanisms of racial control that characterized the era."[97]

In writing her dissertation, Wallach gained a broader view of American culture. Through this study she also began to see the importance of life writing as a way to study history, race relations, and as a way of resisting the status quo.

Autobiographical Voices: Race, Gender, Self-Portraiture analyzes the history and genre of autobiographies and women of color. The author, Francoise Lionnet, asserts, "In the case of marginalized women writers, the situation is compounded by the double stigma of race and gender."[98] One of the stories critiqued in this book is Maya Angelou's second autobiography, *Gather Together in my Name.*[99] This was Angelou's second book in a series of eight autobiographical narratives, and it started where her first memoir ended and had the same sentence structure; they give a historical overview of the places she was living in at the time, how she coped within the context of a larger white society, and the ways that her story played out within that context. This narrative begins to shed a light on how Angelou began to resist overt racism.

In her book, *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*[100], Andrea Smith connects autobiographical accounts and other examples of historical and contemporary colonialism to the high rates of violence against Native American women. She

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[97] Jennifer Jensen Wallach, "Remembering Jim Crow: The Literary Memoir as Historical Source Material" (PhD dissertation, University of Massachusetts Amherst, 2004), 8.

[98] Francoise Lionnet, *Autobiographical Voices: Race, Gender, Self-Portraiture*, (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1989), 3.

[99] Maya Angelou, *Gather Together in my Name*, (New York: Random House, 1974).

[100] Andrea Smith, *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide,* (Cambridge: South End Press, 2005).

discussed the stories of Native American women, noting that, "Communities of color… often advocate that women keep silent about sexual and domestic violence in order to maintain a unified front against racism."[101] This deception caused these women to be isolated by their lack of being able to tell the truth about their life experiences. She also described patriarchy as a tool of violence to subdue and eradicate Native women.

Smith was thirty-nine years old when she authored this book. She had recently earned a Ph.D. in History of Consciousness and was very active in anti-violence work in resisting the hegemony of the dominant culture. She had also served as a rape crisis counselor.

Michelle Johnson Vela is a Latina who did research on the intersectionality of class, gender, and ethnicity. She received a Ph.D. at Indiana University in 2001. Her dissertation focused on the contribution that Hispanic woman have made to the field of memoir, and how they have offered a digression from the Eurocentric/Male oriented life writings of the past. She stated, "Whereas Euroamerican women's autobiographies tend to reflect a more individualized self-reflective voice, which often ignores issues pertaining to class and ethnicity, the life stories of women of color often portray a community-oriented class consciousness, frequently conflicting with the author's desire for independence."[102]

As a woman of color herself, her interest was to discover Latina women who overcame obstacles and found their voice. She has spent her professional life in the halls of

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[101] Ibid.1.

[102] Michelle Johnson Vela, "The Intersection of Gender, Class, and Ethnicity in the U.S.: Latina Life Writings" (PhD dissertation, Indiana University, 2001), vi.

higher education and her main interest is in Latin American women's writing. Her dissertation was the genesis of her activism, and her quest for understanding women who grew up like her, a Latina who overcame many obstacles that were both cultural and familial to achieve a life and success outside of the community in which they were born. She found that these women used education as an impetus to leave their communities.

African American Literary Theory: A Reader, provided a unique historical analysis of how certain African American writers of autobiography shaped literary theory, and literature at large. It contains literary works from fifty-one African American writers such as Mae Gwendolyn Henderson, who wrote the essay, "Speaking in Tongues: Dialogics, Dialetics, and the Black Woman Writer's Literary Tradition.[103]" In the essay, Henderson examined the literary construction of black women's voices and identities as reflective of their individual differences that manifested themselves in multiple ways.

Another essay was written by Zora Neale Hurston. In "What White Publishers Won't Print," Hurston claimed, "I have been amazed by the Anglo-Saxon's lack of curiosity about the internal lives and emotions of the negroes…man, like all the other animals, fears and is repelled by that which he does not understand, and mere difference is apt to connote something malign."[104]

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[103] Mae Gwendolyn Henderson, "Speaking in Tongues: Dialogics, Dialetics, and the Black Woman Writer's Literary Tradition," in *African American Literary Theory: A Reader*, ed. Winston Napier (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 348-368.

[104] Zorna Neale Hurston, "What White Publishers Won't Print," in *African American Literary Theory*, ed. Winston Napier (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 54.

Zora Neale Hurston is different than some of the other women in this bibliographic analysis in that she was older than they were and came of age in a different generation. What she has in common with them is that she lived a life in which she was ostracized and isolated due to her skin color and ethnic background. In her novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God,* [105] Hurston used her pen to describe what it was like concerning coming of age in the 1920s. Through her writing, she found the strength to become an activist in pre-Civil Rights Era, America.

The Private Self: Theory and Practice of Women's Autobiographical Writings is a collection of 12 essays that expose the cultural biases derive from notions of selfhood defined by a white, masculine, and Christian experience. Although, it contains the life writings of both white and African American autobiographers, for the purposes of this dissertation, the analyses of the African American women writers' autobiographies were perused. As Benstock noted, "The work of these writers reveals a split between public and private self-representations, and it is the notion of a private self, expressed through women's autobiographical writings, that forms the link among all the essays."[106]

For example, Paula Gun Allen was a mixed-race writer who used her voice to highlight her struggles. Allen, who died in 2008, was a Native American woman who wrote poetry, novels, short stories, and the occasional academic essay. Having been born in 1939, she came of age during the Civil Rights Era in the United States. She was a lesbian and an activist who critiqued the society in which she lived. She used her writing

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[105] Zorna Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co. 1937).

[106] Shari Benstock, *The Private Self: Theory and Practice of Women's Autobiographical Writings,* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 8.

skills to find her own voice and resist the patriarchal and racist culture of the world into which she was born.

Words of Fire: An Anthology of African American Feminist Thought, is a collection of 37 African American women's autobiographical writings. Editor Beverly Guy – Sheftall commented on the voices of the women whose prose is contained within this assemblage, "Sometimes their feminist discourse is autobiographical, controversial, visionary, understated and subtle, other times it is hard hitting and strident." Included in this compilation is an essay written by Patricia Hill Collins, "The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought.[107]"

It was originally published in a periodical in the summer of 1989 when Collins was working as a professor and she began publishing her writing. She had been greatly affected by the African American women who had survived living in a deeply gendered and bigoted population, yet still found the strength to blaze a trail that became a foundation for Black feminism. At this time in her life she started adding her voice to their lexicon of resistance.

The Norton Book of Women's Lives[108] is a wide-ranging anthology of autobiographical accounts of women's lives. It includes sixty-one selections from autobiographies, journals, and memoirs of twentieth century women. Four of the works were written by African American women writers such as: Maya Angelou, Anne Moody, Audre Lorde, and Zora Neale Hurston. One of the excerpts was from Audre Lorde's autobiography,

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[107] Patricia Hill Collins, "The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought," *Signs* 14, no.4 Common Grounds and Crossroads: Race, Ethnicity, and Class in Women's Lives. (1989): 745-773.

[108] *The Norton Book of Women's Lives*, ed. Phyllis Rose (New York: Norton, 1993).

Zami: A New Spelling of My Name.[109] Lorde was thirty-eight years old when she published this narrative.

She had been active in the Civil Rights Movement and started to use her pen to fight back against the injustices of racism, and sexism in the United States. By this time in her life her two children were almost grown, and she was accomplished as a librarian after having earned a master's degree in library science. In this memoir she begins to deal with the pain of her gradual recognition of racism (which was something from which her mother sought for years to protect her); the suicide of a teen-age best friend for whom she was able to do nothing; and the loss of home at seventeen only to endure hunger, an abortion and Christmas alone. It took Lorde many years to deal the pain and injuries of growing up in a white, patriarchal, dominant culture. Sharing her story was one way in which she gained authority and started advocating for social change.

The literature review in this section is defined as an act of recovering to focus on a way these women writers found true lives and identities.

Reclaiming:

"Mija, Mami, Mama: Constructing the Self in U.S. Latina Prose and Poetry," is the name of Lisa Trevino Roy-Davis's dissertation. She studied the way that certain Latina writers constructed themselves in their writing and concluded that the writing of these women constituted a generative place to study subjectivity, agency and identity structures. She noted, "I also examine the role and function of race on the construct of the

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[109] Audre Lorde, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*, (Watertown: Persephone Press, 1982).

self. I read race as an external force that has a materially specific effect on their lives."[110] The life writings of these Hispanic women were actually acts of reclamation in that they wrote their stories both to define and reclaim their identity.

"Talking Back to History: Leanne Howe, Linda Hogan, and Louis Owen's Rewriting of the Southeastern Native Past Through Fiction," is the title of a master's thesis written by Kimberlee Kaitlyn Hodges, who wrote about these three Native American women's writing as a way to re-appropriate the pasts in their Native Cultures. Hodges became interested in how these women's writing illuminate the stories of history and Native American life in contemporary American society; "Through their writings, one is able to more fully understand the history of Southeastern Native American tribes as they are given insight into what was and is most valued by Native American people to this day such as kinship, spirituality, and the their quest for identity."[111]

The Oxford Book of Women's Writing in the United States,[112] is an anthology filled with 107 literary selections, nine of which were written by women of color. One of the excerpts was written by Leslie Marmon Silko. The excerpt that is discussed here is entitled "*Storytellar."*[113]

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[110] Lisa Trevino Roy-Davis, "Mija, Mami, Mama: Constructing the Self in U.S. Latina Prose and Poetry" (PhD dissertation, Indiana University, 2003), v.

[111] Kimberlee Kaitlyn Hodges, "Talking Back to History: Leanne Howe, Linda Hogan, and Louis Owen's Rewriting of the Southeastern Native Past Through Fiction" (master's thesis, University of Mississippi, 2013), 7.

[112] *The Oxford Book of Women's Writing in the United States,* ed. Cathy Davidson and Linda Wagner-Martin (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

[113] Leslie Marmon Silko, *Storyteller*, (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1981).

She was thirty-three years old when she write it, and finding a sense of personal agency when it was published in 1981. In the book, she included short stories, poems, autobiographical passages and photographs, which depict her thematic concerns: the alienation of Native Americans in society, and the importance of Native American traditions and community in modern times.

Women, Knowledge, and Reality: Explorations in Feminist Philosophy, is an anthology of twenty-five essays written by women about their lives. Five of them were written by women of color. For example, Lourdes Torres wrote, "The Construction of the Self in U. S. Latina Autobiographies." In this essay, Torres stated that, "Through their subversion of the autobiography, the Latina authors are seizing the podium, telling their own stories, creating new images, and contesting the often negative and degrading images which others have used to construct the Latina."[114] She wrote this essay at a time when Latina writers were just beginning to be noticed and published in the United States.

She wanted to point out that Mexican American women's voices were absent in this country due to sexism dominant in the publishing industry of Anglo and Hispanic publishers. She wanted to shine a light on the social construction of these narratives, and on the deeply gendered and racial biases that were deeply embedded in the publishing industry.

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[114] Lourdes Torres, "The Construction of the Self in U. S. Latina Autobiographies," in *Women, Knowledge, and Reality: Explorations in Feminist Philosophy,* ed. Ann Garry and Marilyn Pearsall (New York: Routledge, 1996), 129.

Telling Border Life Stories: Four Mexican American Women Writers is an investigation into twentieth-century autobiographical writing of women of Mexican origin who lived in the American Southwest. These autobiographers put themselves into the text to thus write their experiences into existence. "The autobiographer presents notions of her ethnic self as situated between the symbolic border space between Mexico and the United States."[115]

Mary Helen Ponce is a Chicana writer who was fifty-five years old when she wrote, *Hoyt Street: An Autobiography*[116]. Ponce did not intend to write her life story. However, what began as a writing assignment in a folk lore seminar eventually evolved into a book. Ponce called it a social history of sorts that illuminated the reality of the racist and xenophobic attitudes that exist in what she calls the symbolic border space. It brought these realities into the public sphere.

Women of Color Forum: A Collection of Readings, is an anthology of twelve autobiographical writings by women of color. It was organized to address the issues of both racism and sexism encountered by these women in the United States. The editor of the anthology stated, "The collection of articles and essays included in this publication are meant to provide a general introduction to the different issues and concerns that women of color face."[117]

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[115] Donna M. Kabalen de Bichara, *Telling Border Life Stories: Four Mexican American Women Writers*, (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2013), 15.

[116] Mary Helen Ponce, *Hoyt Street: An Autobiography*, (Albequerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993).

[117] *Women of Color Forum: A Collection of Readings*, ed. Toni Constino (Madison: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 1979) 5.

One of the treatises was written by a Hispanic woman by the name of Gloria Gomez. She was passionate about the way culture and language mixed. Growing up as a Mexican American, she experienced the social isolation that occurs when the only language you speak, is a language that is not the official language of the dominate culture. Later in life, she became involved in bilingual education. Throughout her life and education, she made the connection that language was an important component of survival, and of preserving culture.

Another account by Wendy Monique Arce studied how the Latino community was portrayed in film. Her dissertation looked at the intersectionality of film, religion, and sexuality in the Latino community. Instead of the classical notions of assimilation, Arce brought alternation theory into her discussion. Alternation theory allows Latina/os to shift seamlessly between groups, so that they can retain a connection with their community for support, while adapting to other social units that exist in the United States. Analysis of these women's memoirs and autobiographies were part of her study. Arce's logic for this theoretical switch is, "Latina/os require a supportive ethnic community because U.S. media has created a negative perception of Latina/os since the beginning of cinema."[118]

This Bridge Called My Back, by Gloria Anzaldua, is an edited volume of the writings forty-five women of color. In her forward Gloria Anzaldua noted, "Haven't we always

[118] Wendy Monique Arce, "Reel Negotiations: Exploring the Relationship Between Film, Religion, and Sexuality in the Latino Community" (PhD dissertation, Graduate Theological Union, 2016), 250.

borne jugs of water, children, poverty? Why not learn to bear baskets of hope, love, self-nourishment and to step lightly?"[119]

She wrote this article, "Speaking in Tongues: A Letter to Third World Women Writers,"[120] and by then she had experienced much suffering due to prejudice and racial bias. She wrote this essay in the format of a letter, and she addresses women of color with the text. Hers was one of the first voices in the lexicon of Latina feminism. In her writing, she worked to shine a light on some of the issues common to many Hispanic women, such as racism, sexism, gender identity and ethnic identity and more.

The literature review in this section is defined as reconstruction as rebuilding and/or an act or instance of making over.

Reconstruction:

"Chicana Testimonio and Autobiography: Memory, Representation, and Identity in Lucas, Ruiz, Moraga, and Anzaldua," is the title of a dissertation written by Elizabeth Flores. She stated the purpose as follows, "The study analyzes one testimony, two autobiographical essays, and an autobiography which reflect Chicanas' perspective of the (I) in relation first to collective (we) and our place in this hegemonic patriarchal society." [121]

Cherrie Moraga is a Chicana activist, writer, feminist, poet and playwright. Born in California in 1952, she experienced the loneliness and seclusion of life on the outside of

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[119] Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzuldua, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings By Radical Women of Color,* (Lanthem: Kitchen Table Women of Color Press, 1983), IV.

[120] Ibid. 26.

[121] Elizabeth Flores, "Chicana Testimonio and Autobiography: Memory, Representation, and Identity in Lucas, Ruiz, Moraga, and Anzaldua," (PhD dissertation, Arizona State University, 1999) 7.

the dominate culture. She was deeply affected by the Civil Rights Movement when she was a young teenager and worked as an adult to fight against the racism and patriarchy of the dominate culture, and to facilitate positive change in American society. She earned a master's degree in Feminist Writings in 1980.

Maxine Hong Kingston is a first generation Chinese American. She wrote a memoir entitled *The Woman Warrior*. There were several themes in the narrative that included silence that was both gendered and racially constituted and forced upon her by the American Chinese subculture as a form of control. As a young adult, Kingston struggled with an inner conflict regarding her identity. She wrote this memoir in part to accept her ethnic status and to help resolve lifelong identity issues.

I wonder if it just takes a lifetime or two to be an integrated person, so that you don't have to think, at what point do I have to announce that I am a minority person or a woman or what? When I think back on when I was a young writer, I would wonder, ok now, when do I let everybody know that I am a Chinese American? Do I have to announce that? (230)

She also used this book to give voice to an aunt who had drowned herself because of the rejection she experienced from her family when she became pregnant out of wedlock. Her aunt had no personal agency and died a horrible death, because she was silenced by her family and the harsh societal mores and norms of the times in which she lived. She gave a voice and a sense of personal agency to a beloved woman in her family who died of shame.

The Encyclopedia of Women's Autobiography is a collection of two hundred alphabetically arranged entries written by more than 130 expert contributors including writings by fourteen women of color. The entries discuss individual writers, major works, national and ethnic autobiographical traditions, particular autobiographical genres, and special terms, issues, and themes related to women's memoirs.[122] One of the excerpts in this collection is from Maya Angelou's first memoir, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings,*[123] which is preeminent in the canon of African American women's autobiographies.

It is the first of eight autobiographical texts that she wrote during her life. She was a young adult when she wrote it. It covered her years of self-imposed silence, as well as her finding her voice again; eventually, she used it as a tool of activism. Topics covered are common to autobiographies written by Black American women in the years following the Civil Rights Movement: a celebration of Black motherhood; a critique of racism; the importance of family; and the quest for independence, personal dignity, and self-definition.

Writing African American Women: An Encyclopedia by and about Women of Color is first of its kind. It contains 150 literary works of African American women, illuminating the African American cultural experience through literary works. Included are autobiographies of Audre Lorde and Maya Angelou. Beaulieu states, "Despite the inherently personal connection between an author, her life, and her writing, there has never

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[122] *Encyclopedia of Women's Autobiography*, 1st ed, ed. Victoria Boynton and Jo Malin (Santa Barbara: Greenwood Publishing, 2005).

[123] Maya Angelou, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, (New York: Random House, 1969).

been an easy connection between reality and autobiography. All authors see their own life story through lenses of distance, self-love, and authorial prose." [124]

One of the authors included is Gloria Naylor, who was an African American writer who is best known for her debut novel, *The Women of Brewster Place*[125]. The book views oppression in an urban environment through the lens of a community of seven different African American women.

Meta Michond Cooper wrote about Anne Moody's book, *Coming of Age in Mississippi*[126], in the thesis for her MA. Her study analyzed Moody's autobiography as part of an African American autobiographical tradition, "African American literature emerged within the genre of autobiography dating back to slavery and post-slavery. As a result, the use of the personal story to provide social commentary has a long-standing tradition within African American history and literature."[127] As an African American woman who grew up in Mississippi, Cooper was fascinated by Moody's childhood. Moody was born on a plantation where her ancestors worked as slaves, thus wrote about her experiences to show the truth about growing up poor and black, in an extremely racist culture.

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[124] Elizabeth Ann Beaulieu, *Writing African American Women: An Encyclopedia by and about Women of Color*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2006), 29.

[125] Gloria Naylor, *The Women of Brewster Place*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1983).

[126] Anne Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi*: *The Classic Autobiography of Growing Up Poor and Black in the Rural South,* (New York: Doubleday, 1968).

[127] Meta Michond Cooper, "Anne Moody's "Coming of Age in Mississippi": Furnishing a Paradigm for Inquiry" (master's thesis, Howard University, 2009), 5.

Alice Walker wrote *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens: Womanist Prose.* In this, her first collection of thirty-six pieces of nonfiction, she analyzes pieces ranging from the personal to the political. Among the contents are analyses of and essays about other women writers who wrote memoirs and autobiographies about living in an intolerant culture where they are undervalued. In speaking about the importance of women of color writing their life stories Walker commented, "Consulting, as belatedly discovered models, those writers—most of whom, not surprisingly, are women- who discovered that their experience as ordinary human beings was also valuable, and in danger of being misrepresented, distorted, or lost."[128] Written after her novel,[129] this was Walker's first non-fiction book. The essays, articles, reviews, statements, and speeches in this compilation were written between 1966 and 1982, and by that time she had lived in and observed the African American community in pre-and-post Civil Rights Era.

As I end this selected review of literature on autobiography and memoir analysis, I want to add the caveat that this is not an exhaustive review of this type of literature. It is a seriously researched sampling.

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[128] Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens: Womanist Prose,* (New York: Harcourt Inc. 1983), 13.

[129] Alice Walker, *The Color Purple*, (New York: Harcourt, 1982).