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COPING WITH TRAUMA: SELF-PORTRAYAL IN LINDA HOGAN'S MEMOIR

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Abstract: *This essay demonstrates that in Linda Hogan's The Woman Who Watches over the World (2001) the "I" confronts the trauma of the past and of the present in order to reconcile her self with her personal and communal histories in the aftermath of the riding accident that changed her life. Her strategies of coping with trauma are shown to include an emphasis on spirituality and self-awareness as well as the very writing of her memoir. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson's insights from their introduction to Women, Autobiography, Theory are used for analyzing Hogan's autobiographical practices. The situatedness of the subject implies an examination both of gender issues and of tribal history. Invoking the history of destruction inflicted on American Indian communities, Hogan discusses the Chickasaw past as announcing her own pain-stricken life: "I am one of the children who lived inside my grandmother, and was carried, cell, gene, and spirit, within mourners along the Trail of Tears" (123). The "I" sees the relationship with her mother, based on silence, as the source of her alienation. The discovery of self-expression turns into a way towards salvation and delivers her from the pain of history. However, the legacy of violence lives on and surfaces in the descendants of those who experienced removal, loss and humiliation on the Trail of Tears. The volume American Indian Women Telling their Lives by Gretchen M. Bataille and Kathleen Mullen Sands provides the specificity of the terms needed to address such topics which are further illuminated by references to Linda Hogan's novels and non-fiction.*