Throughout the novel, water is almost always associated with power, magic and mystery. Water also accompanies many important events. In different forms, lake, storm, snow, and etc., the author presents water everywhere in the book.

Lake Matchimanito is the water that gets mentioned the most in the book and plays an irreplaceable role in the whole plot. We first see the lake in chapter one, when Nanapush rescued Fleur from the dead Pillagers. Nanapush described the lake as “surrounded by the highest oaks, by woods inhabited by ghosts and roamed by Pillagers, who knew the secret ways to cure or kill” and the tribal police Pukwan is afraid to go near the lake. From the beginning, the lake has been associated with mystery and magic.

Besides the first appearance of the lake, most of the myths surrounding Lake Matchimanito and Fleur are told by Pauline, who is not really a reliable source. For example, in the second chapter, we know that Fleur was drowned twice in the lake. “The first time she drowned in the cold and glassy waters of Matchimanito, Fleur was only a child … She was cold to the touch and stiff … By saving Fleur Pillager, those two had lost themselves.”, and “the next time she fell in the lake, … no one touched her” and the man that approached her lost his mind. Pauline also introduced the Lake Monster, Misshepeshu, and his connection with Fleur. The power of Fleur associated with the lake is confirmed but Pauline does not always tell the truth. However, near the end of the book, with the third drowning of Fleur, we know that the myths are more or less true. After losing her child, Fleur seemed to have lost her power and she was helpless in getting her land back. After drowning in the water the third time, she was able to get back her power and hurt the people working for the lumber company. The lake, associated with Indian belief and myth, acts as the source of her power, in contrast with the twisted Catholicity, which is more or less the source of power for Pauline.

There are also several scenes where the characters cross the lake. For example, the first of these scenes happens when Margaret asks Nanapush to take her to Fleur’s. “… the waves on the lake were small confused ripples … the water could be deceptive, set snares for the careless young or for the withered-up and eager fools like ourselves.” And Margaret had to bail water out of the boat. The lake is depicted with a mysterious and dangerous atmosphere and is considered somehow difficult to cross. I think this more or less embodies the separation of and conflict between the Indian and white culture, and that Indians like Fleur are resisting the white encroachment of the land and culture. Later in that chapter, Nanapush mentions that “the water open for a boat if you dared to travel that way, which I did … We took the quick way again, paddling across, … [Margaret] bailing for her life”. It seems that the water is not so dangerous as depicted the first time they cross the lake, and in fact they are not harmed at all. Another example, in the final chapter of Pauline, in her religious mania, she dreams of Lake Matchimanito, “the lake was pounding, rolling, and the sky over me was dark” and the Lake Monster. Then she stole Nanapush’s boat and tried to cross the lake to see Fleur, “the blue brightened, drifted over with wisps of sparkling fog. … The water rose to my ankles. I prayed. The water stopped.” Later, Pauline killed Napoleon who she thought was the Lake Monster. The lake again acts like a divide between the Indian world and the white world. In her last visit to Fleur, Pauline decides to detach from everything that is related to her old self. She did not even recognize her own child and strangled her lover to death.

Some other events are also associated with the lake. For example, when Eli wants to get Fleur back after he and Sophie coupled under the influence of love medicine, he followed Fleur to the lake where Fleur went into the water and disappeared. Eli tried to rescue her only to find she was already on shore before he exhausted himself. This event again demonstrates the connection between Fleur and the lake.

Another significant appearing of water is the storm (I don’t know if this counts as a form of water or not), with which Fleur is believed to kill the men in Argus. After Fleur is raped (it seems so) by the men at the butcher’s, she cried their names in old language and is believed to summon a storm to destroy the whole town of Argus, including the steeple of church, and killed the men. “Light glared off the skinned and hanging carcasses, the crates of wrapped sausages, the bright and cloudy blocks of lake ice, pure as winter.”

Also, many important scenes happen in snow. When looked down by the statue of the Virgin in the snow with Sophie, Pauline believed she witnessed something and sort of underwent a religious transformation. After being resisted by Fleur, Eli went to Nanapush’s and, with his help, hunted in the snow. Nanapush and Margaret were Kidnapped by Boy Lazarre and Clarence Morrissey in the snow. After Fleur losing her child and lost her power, Lulu was found cold and sleepy at the door of Nanapush’s in the snow. In a fleet, Fleur protected her stillborn baby with the black umbrella Fritzie gave her. I’m not sure about the connection or things in common between these events, but they are all important to the plot development and character building. Snow is cold and represents winter, which is always associated with hunger, cold, and other negative aspects of life. Through presenting many important events in the setting of snow, I think the author intends to convey a sense of decreased life power, withering, and the destined fate of the Indians.

There are also other important mentions of water. Under the influence of Pauline’s love medicine, Eli and Sophie made love in water. Nanapush, when teasing with Pauline, told a story of water in the old language. Fleur bathed of Pauline in water, and the latter compared this with Fleur putting her and Russel in the closet. Also, Pauline punished herself several times with ice, another form of water, and she also described her new name Leopolda “cracked in my ears like a fist through the ice”.