

WRITER AS CRITIC SERIES XIII

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MEMORY
SERVES
ORATORIES

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Choice is sacred:

We are more or less educated in the teachings and stories of our nations and we select what we commit to remember. We create by selecting from this knowledge base, though we may think we create from the whole. For example, Thomas King is a Longhouse (Cherokee) storiér; he creates very different stories from me, though we tackle very similar subjects, have some very common teachings — our origin story is almost the same, so much so that some Stó:lō people believe that the Iroquoian speaking peoples have pirated our origin story — but we have taken very different story telling aspects to commit to and applied different ways of imagining story. This is not unlike European storiers who are taught English story structure, plot, metaphor, etc. and yet when the pen hits the page something completely unique is born. Storiers are aware that choice is sacred, that story creation, while hooked to social origins, is a uniquely personal ceremony and the product, the story, will be always different if some other person crafts it. That is not to say that our stories have nothing in common. European-crafted story enjoys common elements with many Indigenous stories, but an individual storiér makes choices that render the stories intensely individual. Stories arise from the cultural base of the storiers' origins, but the individuality of the storiér personalizes and alters the presentation of each story. Freedom of expression and the sacredness of choice bind all storiers, European and Indigenous, together.

Haitchka, Gloria.

ORATORY ON ORATORY

Seeing Ourselves Through Story vs. Western Models

In the study of literature, Western instructors often pose the question, "What was the author thinking, doing, intending?" Salish thinkers and philosophers (orators) regard such questions as invasive, and do not grant themselves the right to ask them, much less answer, in the absence of the author. Such questions are meaningless in terms of the function of story in our society. The point of hearing (and now reading) story is to study it in and of itself, to examine the context in which it is told, to understand the obstacles to being that it presents, and then to see ourselves through the story, that is, transform ourselves in accordance with our agreement with and understanding of the story. The answer to the question governing the author's intent leads to the transformation of the author, not that of the listener or reader. We encourage growth and transformation in other humans, but we do not see it as our purpose to assist them in the process of maturation. The objective is mature, transformative governance.

This invasiveness marks the nature of the Diaspora. It is rooted in the Western notion that society can guess what is going on in someone's mind by what they write. In their successful global

conquest, the mother countries, the Diaspora I am talking about here, collectively and individually, granted themselves the right to claim discovery, and then proceeded to define, delineate, and demarcate the cultural, intellectual, economic, spiritual, and physical being for the entire world. The institutions of this Diaspora usurped the authority of, and established exclusive dominion over, the standards for all sorts of things, including education and literary creation. This global positioning of privilege and dominion affects the Diaspora's attitude toward those outside its privileged location. Its right to speculate on what is in the mind, body, heart, and spirit of others is an unquestioned agreement. The citizens of this Diaspora practise this exclusive right based on the right of their state to arbitrarily determine the nature of their relations with all others, often without due consideration to those others. This has had disastrous results in the world. Disaster is the outcome of invasiveness, to wit, war and environmental destruction.

The structure of a building determines its style; the structure establishes the parameters of its foundation in a limiting way. The type of building constructed tends to be similar to others built before it. This, in turn, limits its function, its use, and its aesthetics. The owner of the building limits entry. Aristotelian definitions of drama and poetry were based on Greek aristocratic supremacy and exclusivity. They reflected Greek culture and Greek social norms. The structure of Aristotelian story reproduces the structure of Aristotle's society: hierarchical, patriarchal, and racist. The compliance by White male writers over centuries with Aristotelian definitions gave birth to a collection of writings that, designated as the canon, governs our present. As Europe set about to establish colonial preponderance over the entire globe, it foisted this canon on the colonies. It erected structures globally to exclude and limit other types of participation.

Today the colonized are free to challenge this House of Lords.

Stó:lō Study Methodology

Study can be contemplative, reflective, dramatic, responsive, analytical, dynamic, collaborative, and inspiring. It is capable of sparking and moving people toward social transformation, dissolving inequities, eradicating dangerous assumptions, and altering oppressive conditions. It is also capable of rationalizing those same oppressive conditions and upholding inequity by ignoring underlying assumptions that may prove dangerous to position. Depending on the direction from which we choose to examine the subject and the position we hold as examiners, serious study can maintain or threaten the status quo. The motivation for our examination (gatekeeping or a desire for relationship) guides the process of examination. The objective of the examiner narrows or broadens the thoroughness of the examiner's search. If we are colonized, study can direct us toward freedom, and it can be liberating. If we are colonizers, it can direct us toward our humanity, and this too is liberating. If we fail to master study, to question the direction from which looking occurs, or to ponder the motive for seeing and studying, then study becomes reactive, reproductive, and colonial.

In a certain sense, fiction/myth, story, is real: it is historic and reflects life; it is conditioned by the desire to mirror a character's relationships with the world. Salish study looks for the obstacles to growth and transformation, both in the external and the internal worlds. Once an understanding is achieved, the mythmakers story it up in a way that they hope leads humans toward social maturity and growth. The assumption here is that growth and maturity are capable of inspiring intervention and will lead to the transformation of the dichotomous social arrangements in Canada.

For First Nations people, study is directed at that which is not seen, not known, at what is cherished and hidden. In the discovery

of the unknown lies growth. At the bare minimum, consciousness of who we are ought to occur. This takes some humility and, of course, some witnesses who know you. Study, then, is a collective and collaborative process: collective not in the sense that one wants to come to a common position, but collective in that many participate; and collaborative in that we all wish to come to a good mind about what is cherished and hidden. The good mind ranges from clarity, consciousness, to the end goal of a good life. In order to see what is not known, personal agendas must be articulated and set aside. We engage witnesses to assist students in ensuring that we have truly set aside our agendas. The light must be bent in a direction that is not obvious, that is in the shadow.

In shadow land we experience the discomfort of the unknown. Healers are present to ensure that this discomfort is processed and pushed past, and that we don't make fear-based, discomfort-based decisions about the unknown. Each of us is called upon to open our eyes to see what we have not dared hitherto to look at. Study is about searching for what lies beneath the obvious, unmasking the journey of a phenomenon coming into being, and engaging ourselves in imagining its passing out of being.

Mythmakers, storiers, are present to bear witness, see, and understand the subject under study, and serve as adjuncts to the process, so that they may story up each round of discourse in a way that governs the new conduct required to grow from the new knowledge discovered. We assume that individuals have different viewpoints: in fact, the more variance in viewpoints, the better. There is no arguing or challenging someone's viewpoint. We are certain that there is a place for oppositional points of view, as all views are seen as an aspect of the whole. We are interested in clearly stating what we see and looking for the key to the unknown in the voices and words of others. We are listening — our imaginations

fully engaged — to what is said, what is not said, and what is connected to what is not said. The words spoken by others direct the listener to imagine and think. Rememberers attend to the words spoken with care, so that the oratory can be repeated later. They commit to recalling without judgement every word spoken. The speakers use words sparingly with poetic force, vision, and poignancy, so the rememberers will have an easy time of recall. Once the first round of deliberations is up, we imagine the story that will encourage us to look again, to peel back each layer and gain deeper understanding.

The next round is to imagine what direction each of the pathways arising from each person's contribution leads. This is a query round, sometimes a round of mini-stories, to assist in our search. It is a round in which we attempt to look beyond ourselves, to gauge the future, and to reassess the masks we wear in the present. The moment we hear something we have not heard before, whether we believe it has value or not, we build on it as a way of arriving at understanding. We flesh out this new idea, and then we story that up.

Every deliberation leads to discovery, new relationships, new directions, and, of course, new story because we build on what we have not heard or said before. Once the new thought is understood, then the storiers, the mythmakers, the poets, and the dramatists conjure story in a way that will assist the whole in establishing a relationship to the new. They are expected to do so with freedom and choice in mind; the stories then must be lean narratives, narratives that enable the listener to contribute to the narrative and make choices about the direction he or she chooses to take in the light of this new phenomenon.

Orators are our knowledge bearers, teachers, scientists, environmentalists, agriculturists, aquaculturists, historians, and rememberers. For a people whose culture rests on becoming, not

becoming is tragic. In order to blossom, we must be free to see, to study in a culturally appropriate manner. See is relentless, powerful or hampering, imprisoning or liberating. What we look at and what we do not look at is no accident. It is established by the place of the seers in the social fabric, the positions they hold and the journeys to their particular place. Position also shapes what is looked at and what is ignored. Culture abrogates personal responsibility for systemic being, or it calls us to question being and place and culture itself. It grants us a means by which to rationalize our position and place in relation to, or it challenges us to question the arrangement and assignment of place. If we enjoy a position of privilege, we may engage ourselves in personalizing the journey of the story and resent the challenge to place. In seeing our selves through story, we become part of the journey. Those who turn a blind eye to Canadian First Nations literature will not see the rock upon which the place and privilege of each member of the Diaspora rests.

When studying a subject, we first face our attitudes, our beliefs, and our agendas. We face the filters through which our specific cultural and personal origins affect clear and clean vision. Even though we may not be aware of our blinders, our masks, and our filters, we have them. These blinders, masks, and filters pervert the attention we pay or don't pay to the condition or being of others. Attention is a device driving us to implode—or explode or desire—transformation, or to exchange desire for the mundane and the old, driving us to plod along blind to the new and different in the world. We articulate the way in which we rationalize our place and identify how this colours our vision. It is not enough to articulate the masks through which we see. For see to be thorough, the seekers must engage their search in a conscious process of removing the masks and dropping the filters through which they are peering; we struggle to set them aside, to ensure that we are looking at the being

and the phenomena free of our personal history. We believe that our attitudes, our beliefs, and our agendas are the ordinary, everyday masks we wear that facilitate the reproduction of social and cultural being in a static way. Stasis promotes decadence. The goal is to study something with transformation and growth in mind. These masks are not all that useful in establishing new relationships. Unless we bend the light in the direction of our attitudes, beliefs, and agendas, we will not be able to drop the mask, let go of our original vision, and expand it to “include” the vision of others in our scope of see. Oratory is braided to the processes of see, to study, to unmasking our attitudes; it requires the mythmakers to remove the filters that colour and taint vision. Our stories reflect all of these processes.

See has a methodology that is emotive, spiritual, intellectual, and physical. It can be affirming and mundane, as though it sought the repainting of the same picture, as though it were moved to repeat history, as though it were its own force holding the old social conditions and relations in place. In its possession of force, it may draw us to look again, to re-search, to play, to fiction ourselves in dreams of transformation or to escape the very force of looking. Intentions are masks constructed of experience; they hide cruel intent arising out of wounded and violated vulnerability, or surrender, or unrequited love. Force is a volcano waiting to explode. In the dichotomized world of Diaspora and chronic invasion, we are all equally capable of marching in these directions.

Story becomes a means of intervention preventing humans from re-traversing dangerous and dehumanizing paths. Oratory, then, is responsive. It challenges the state of being of the people who are being “storied up.” It is transformative. It pulls up the sort of characters who can best “story” the subject, the obstacles, and the characters, which impede transformation and/or freedom.

The Object of Study

The object of study from a Salish perspective is ultimately the creation of oratory that will lead us onto a path of continuous growth and transformation, and that will enable us to engage all life in the type of spirit-to-spirit relationship that leads all parties to the good life. We did not have the concepts of law, order, and compliance that require systems of force to uphold them. Our concept of the good life was rooted in recognition of the perfect right to be for all beings. We do so from the emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and physical perspective that all beings enjoy a perfect right to be as they are. We believe that each being owns a sense of distance between itself and human beings, a survival right, and a value to the totality of life, even if we don't know what that value is.

Study is tempered by humans studying the space between the beings in the relationships humans are engaged by. From the snow flea on a glacier to barracudas and sharks, the small beings and the invisible beings, all beings have a perfect right to be. We respect the barracuda, but we recognize that the charming smile of this predator is dangerous, and so we maintain a good distance from his territory, and we don't swim with sharks. Principles of fair exchange govern all of our relationships. We pick berries in such a way that the berries are assured of continued renewal, and we are cautious to leave some for the bears. We study from the perspective that, as the variable beings on earth, it is humans that need to transform and alter their conduct to engage in relationship with other beings and phenomena. Relationship engagement is disciplined by conjuring the least intrusive and invasive conduct possible, respecting the distance and reproductive rights of other beings, and ensuring the greatest freedom of beings to be as they are and always will be. This requires that we study the life of

beings and phenomena in our world from their perspective, and not from the perspective of our needs.

The goal of study is to see a being or phenomenon in and of itself and for itself with the purpose of engaging it in a relationship that is mutually beneficial. First, we need to know *who we are* and the possible obstacles to understanding that our history may present. In the course of study, we deliberately engage people with different kinds of knowledge, points of view, and different understandings, people whose journeys are dissimilar to ours, who may have witnessed the phenomena under study from their own perspective. Should we discover discomfort during the process, we track back the source of discomfort from inside ourselves, inside our journey, our history, and face our fears and ourselves, face our discomfort and disconnect it from the subject under study. Then we story this up. We express the governing impact our history has on the way we see. We story up the blinders and the filters we inherit from our history. In this way, we develop an intimate appraisal of our emotional responses to history, to movement, to the dynamics and conduct of others in relation to ourselves. If we cannot let go of our history's impact, we abstain from the process. We imagine our desire, our capacity for transformation, and our place in the universe next to the being we try to relate to, gauge its importance to us, measure our desire for relationship with it, and discuss it with our peers as story/oratory. We must study, and engage ourselves in the pursuit of study, in the interest of both ourselves and the subject of study. We are in varying degrees successful or not in this endeavour, but it is the goal of our study.

We know that standards, norms, and experiences can become obstacles to clear perception, and we take the time to clear the norms that reduce us to seeing through some kind of collective fog, filtered through old standards.

This Is the First Story That Needs to Be Told

On one hand, we recognize that humans have the capacity to be concatenate, to link with all beings and phenomena, to be conscious, to be aware of our personal motives, to be curious, to be open to the discovery of others, and to be creative, to make the links and connections happen in a mutually beneficial way. On the other hand, we recognize that humans are very much like viruses; given the opportunity, they will colonize another being, unless disciplined to travel in another direction toward relationship and away from conquest. Opportunism is an inherent part of our spirit. This opportunistic behaviour has both an upside and a downside. On the upside, opportunism creates a sense of doubt and desire that leads us to question ourselves and the world around us, calls us on our motivations, calls us to create new things from the world around us so that, when we feel uncomfortable, we can be inspired to track our discomfort and engage in personal and social transformation.

As variables in the grand scheme of creation, in our origin stories we enter the world as both fragile and resilient beings. Like viruses, we are difficult to contain. In fact, our resilience defies containment. Freedom is always on our agenda. Like viruses, we appear to have an edge on the animal beings. A wolf, for instance, cannot alter its being and become, say, a truck driver, a doctor, or a lawyer, while a doctor or a lawyer could in theory lead a wolf's life; he or she could live in very harsh circumstances, sleep under the stars with a minimum of protection from nature (like a fur coat), and sustain himself for some time on field mice, the primary diet of a wolf. This is not to say that wolves are not as intelligent, emotional, spiritual, character-driven, social, or complex as we are; it is just a fact that a wolf would not succeed at a

contemporary law school, and it would be dangerous for a wolf to undertake to drive a truck. As variables that are fragile, and yet capable of great opportunistic destruction, we are called upon to pay attention to our relationship with others, to engage the world and all its beings in a responsive and responsible manner that is cognizant of the perfect right of other beings to be in relationship to us. We are not entitled to use the information gathered about the impossibility of the wolf becoming a lawyer to demean the wolf's being, or to give us the right to murder him. This is the exploitative work of invaders. This will not result in a future relationship with the wolf.

Conquest is neither the object of study nor the desire of relationship. We long ago relinquished invasion as a way of being. In so doing, we have come to see that if we see the story of a social formation as an inherently oppressive phenomenon, we are called upon to story up its oppressive features and the impact of these features on the myriad of characters from our world in the hope that our citizens will catalyze social transformation from within the story. This opportunism can sometimes drive us to sink into discomfort, pirate the things around us, retreat into blind denial, and entrench ourselves in the defeat of the business of personal growth in exchange for participation in conquest and colonization.

This Is the Business of Oratory

Even in the worst catastrophe, there is something unknown and cherished to be discovered. We are certain that all life and death contain something cherished that can be observed; if we listen, if we look for its internal dynamic, watch its behaviour, and commit to its being, we may discover it. Once we discover it, we can establish a relationship with it. Despite the distance maintained between the barracuda and ourselves, we still have a relationship

with it. That relationship is one of cherishing the distance between predator and prey; in this way, the barracuda becomes a teacher, and the relationship is one of student and teacher. The space is deep green water. We determine the nature of relationship, and the mythmakers create oratory as story so that each person can conduct himself or herself in a complementary fashion. We can know that we are successful only if both the being and ourselves flourish, or if the phenomenon (e.g., colonialism) is transformed into something all agree is better than before.

This Is the Desire of Oratory

Salish people created the frameworks and language within which we may view the world in the way I'm outlining here to ensure the greatest absence of destruction, invasion, imposition, and obstruction in our engagement of the world, while still availing ourselves of the resources required for our specific continuance. These frameworks prevent us from becoming conquerors, and lead us away from systems of slavery and toward spirit-to-spirit relationships based on a profound understanding of ourselves. They did not lead us away from war, but we are sure they will in the end.

We set the unknown but cherished thing at the centre of a study circle. Each of the students is an expert gathered at the outer edges of the circle. Each person forms a wedge of vision observing the space directed toward discovery of the unknown. Each observer brings an angle of perception that, when rallied, engaged, and exchanged, brings vital observations, which will assist us in considering the internal dynamics that might govern the behaviour of the being in the least judgemental way possible. We do not believe we can fully understand the being/phenomena under study. We recognize that we are not able to walk inside the body/

mind/heart/spirit of the being/phenomenon; we cannot know the thoughts/thinking, emotions/emotionality, and spirit/spirituality of the being or phenomenon. In our ordinary travels through the mundane tasks of life, we rarely look deeply at the world around us. In the course of study, we pay attention to ordinary beings and bend the light in the direction of the unseen, of the shadows inherent in any being. Inside shadow land lies the dynamics of hidden being. We can see its behaviour, gauge its patterns, note the direction of its movement, and come to grips with it in relation to us. We can see its journey, and render it as story. We can study this journey and try to understand ourselves in relation to its story so that we can peacefully coexist.

We then story up the nature of safe engagement in mutually beneficial relations.

We attempt to story another being/phenomenon's behaviour and commit to its journey, its coming into being and going out of being, to this story. We then alter our conduct, our behaviour, to facilitate a common journey alongside of the being/phenomenon without interrupting its physical or cultural continuum, and we story that up. We commit ourselves to social structures, which lend themselves to creative, re-creative formation and transformation. This is how oratory is born. Oratory is a painting; it is about the freedom between beings and about cherishing the distance between them; it is about relationship, and as such it is about life. Oratory is comprised of the complex relations between disparate characters in their concatenation or their lack of it. It is the story of patterned events. Oratory is a human story in relation to the story of other beings, and so it is fiction, for it takes place in, while engaging, the imagination of ourselves in relation to all beings. Oratory informs the stories of our nations in relation to beings of all life.

The Study of Oratory Requires That We Peel Back the Layers

The process of study is based on story. Stories are about characters, and we believe that character is inherent and unalterable. Those who would alter character do so under threat of creating disastrous consequences; therefore we challenge conduct, not character. The conduct we challenge is, of course, the conduct of ourselves as humans. Under each pattern of conduct is a layer of history. We strive to protect the dignity, movement, and space of those under study. Thus we search and research the history of their conduct and deal with their history as influence. We attach conduct to the influence of history, inspiring the character to alter conduct if that conduct impedes relationship. This is our meaning of respect. We engage in the process without the expectation of agreement or amicability, without preset standards. This is the meaning of openness, which is a prerequisite to learning. No being is reduced to the conquered. No being is extorted by others or demeaned to a lesser place of being through humiliating practices. All phenomena are valid and acceptable, part of the picture, and it is in the creation of a whole picture, a totality, that the work of study begins as story, that becomes part of the body of our oratory. We do not leave the world of flora and fauna out of the process. The origin stories of the trees, the flora and fauna, and so forth are articulated during the process as needed.

We first see how the character moves, see how it conducts itself, how it marks its own sense of movement, its sense of time and being, its sense of territoriality, its organizational structure. We connect its conduct to its being, and then we connect its movement to its desire, its sense of time to its longevity, and its behaviour to its condition, history, and environment; and we story that up. Until we have a vast body of patterned movement and conduct observed

through many sets of eyes, we make no deductions. *Ravensong* presents characters in the condition of patterned colonial movement. This is what oratory or a novel is all about to me. It is also one of the options accorded literary creation in the Euro-tradition. To include oratory as novel in the world of literature does not detract from western definitions.

This process of study is a collective process. It is not oriented toward collectivizing the thinking of those who participate in it. It requires many different sets of eyes, many different minds whose histories are known yet different, whose journeys have led them along adjunct but disparate paths, whose understandings and whose emotions/spirit/mind/body are determined to be travelling in the direction of relationship and good will. We gather people together who are the most capable of seeing and articulating what they see. Together, we paint a whole picture, as complete a picture as our collective can create. We engage one another through the images created by those sitting in the circle. The images must be sincerely and genuinely presented points of view – images, observations, and understandings, not biases. Should a bias arise, we are called upon to set it aside, and identify our ability to rise above our history and conditions and state our capacity for making, or not making, judgements based on some previous past.

The desire is to find the connections, to create the webs between the disparate points of view, images, and stories, and to ensure that the end of the journey is the spiralling down to a moment of peace and recognition. These connections are seen as the creation of windows of opportunity for seeing the future and for transformation. What the speakers/storiers do share is a common sense of direction and a common commitment to moving in the direction of discovering the unknown. We know that, if we examine something from one subjective angle (all human observation and thought are

presumed to be subjective), then we will understand only an aspect of the being under study, and we are very likely to engage in huge errors, leap to absurd conclusions based on subjective assumptions, and so forth. This is a process that shows we have come to cherish what is new and struggling to be born.

Discourse Is Creative

This discourse of study engages the work of our creative imagination. The first round articulates the direction from which the viewer perceives. The second round engages with what is seen of the physical behaviour, the coming into being and the going out of being of the being/phenomenon. The third round articulates the being/phenomenon's interaction, its relations with other beings (water, flora, fauna, human, stars, night, day, etc.). Next comes the articulation of its characteristics – its personalities, quirks, oddities – and of its difference from the human condition. Then follows a discussion about what was cherished and hidden, but is now seen in the light of our different perspectives, from our separate, and now shared, observations. Where do we intersect and connect? How do we commune with this being/phenomenon? How do we interact in the least obtrusive way possible? This process requires a facilitator/teacher who has no personal stake in guiding the outcome, but rather is committed to the purity of process and maximizing the participation of each contributor.

We are successful in varying degrees, but we are all clear that that is the process to which we commit.

Conventions Governing Process

There are conventions governing the language of this process. Words are sacred, they are breath, breath is wind, and wind is power. Wind is earth's bellows transforming land, water, sea, and

weather. Breath is human wind, our bellows urging us in the direction of transformation and relationship forming. In the end, life is lived through wind's breath. Hard truths require soft language – poetics; journeys are the language of story. The physical coming into being and going out of being is the language of drama; relationship is the language of poetic story. Everyone commits to remembering what others have said, which means brevity is critical. The story conjured is lean, the poetry as pure as the speaker can render it, and the drama short, open-ended scenes linked to the being/phenomenon. Relationship between listeners and the subjects of story becomes possible if the listeners can study the story, see themselves in the story, and transform themselves or their society. Some of the speakers' stories have to do with what lies underneath the past – storied observations presented – and enable the new storiers, the mythmakers, to deepen the story, broaden it, and find intersecting, connecting moments between human and the being/phenomenon.

We conjure the story in such a way that the best human conduct will show itself through it. How do we shape the story so listeners are inspired to consider conduct that will explicitly direct them to the specifics of transformation without narrowing or defining what may be learned? Without limiting the myriad of directions the transformation of all listeners might take? Every story is a guide fleshed out by the listeners in their consideration of future. Story impacts on the shape of the future the listener hears, and she or he completes the story from his or her own direction. The process of study must give listeners the option of determining the alteration of their personal conduct in an atmosphere of freedom. They must be free to make change in accordance with the limits of their character. At the same time, the direction of the whole nation must serve the longevity of relationship with the beings/phenomena generations

into the future. If the story does not do this, then how do we story this up? The story calls upon listeners to lend their imagination and voice to it, contribute to its unfolding, and reshape their conduct based on their personal understanding of the relationship or the absence of relationship.

The story must represent the obstacles to the future that are inherent in the story experienced by the listener. Its lean, poetic, dramatic, and narrative structure is deliberate. The circle of listeners provides the flesh of the narratives. Their villages carried history, story, romance, social being, cultural life, creativity, and growth and transformation from the village to the nation and back to the village. They did so in the language of the listeners. The more attitudes storied, the more perspectives presented, the more choices the listeners have. Thus I think it is funny when someone criticizes *Ravensong*, saying the character of Celia is insufficiently exploited; from the Salish perspective of oratory, this is a compliment.

The final step is to recognize a rememberer as guardian/keeper of the story. No elections are held, nor are appointments made or any agendas drawn up. This process is as fluid as the tide. We know when the story is born. The rememberer knows when she or he has committed to its telling. In the modern world, a book assumes the position of rememberer.

The end result is a powerful story, a long lasting relationship, and characters that foster beauty, hope, heart, and song.

Students are responsible for identifying what they know of the subject of study before tackling the business of study. The instructor is responsible for facilitating the student's study. Thus study becomes a process of personal exploration of the truths within the layers of hidden being, peering past the obvious and ferreting out the unseen. Students pull on the threads that feed the story (Diaspora, sexism, racism, patriarchy, homophobia, etc.)

and that constructed the cultural fabric. They seek the invisible threads that bind them to the characters in the story, and unravel these threads. Students travel on the story's journey to the centre where peace and recognition lie within them. When students have come to a place of peace with the journey, reconciled themselves to themselves, then and only then do they really know something. At that moment, they can remove their blinders, what keeps their feet on the ground, and see sacred black, eyes closed, light cut out, and their point of coming into being and the point of going out of being, and begin a new journey. We need to draw upon the tangled web of colonial being, thread by thread – watch as each thread unfurls, untangles, shows its soft underbelly, its vulnerability, its strength, its resilience, its defiance, its imposition, its stubbornness – rediscover Canada and First Nations people.

We desire to find the fullest, richest, and most interesting and mutually beneficial relationship possible in the least obtrusive and most congenial way possible, to engage the being/phenomenon – its history, its condition, and its conduct in relation to ourselves. This does not require that we shy from the obstacles in the path to relationship. Quite the contrary, obstacles need to be seen, and the hope of story is that the listeners will come together to clear the obstacles to future relationship. We imagine that this desire for relationship might be driven by our mutual right to be. We seek to satisfy our need for continuum as cultural and social beings alongside others – not under them or over them, but exactly like them, alongside them, different, known and cherished by them. This means that the current Diaspora and chronic invasion dynamic interrupting the relationships between us needs to be addressed. We have addressed this obstacle from our side of the table, but Canadians need to face themselves and commit to the transformation of the current relationship between us.

Desire is the hothouse motoring our opportunism and our doubt; it also motors our ability to be concatenate, to be creative, to be conscious, and to remain genuinely curious about all life. In our opportunistic self, humans look with a self-motivated affirmative purpose. That which does not serve our interests is not always attended to. Each human enjoys the capacity for transformation and seeks it on one level or another, or does not. In its unconscious opportunistic state, see's objective can be holy or perverse, and the seer has no way of knowing, without advice and counsel from the community, which direction the vision is guiding him or her. Humans bring intent with their vision. Intentions are sometimes dangerously reactionary. We may choose to see phenomena from the angle of perception we inherit. In our conscious state, we may seek that which is beyond our realm of perception, and this produces a visionary perception that can be transformative or reactive. Study is not about isolating parts; it is about seeing things in their separate movement and being, then connecting what we see to our own capacity for concatenation and the limits of the concatenate of the being under examination. At this time in history, Canadians are unable to face themselves, and so the concatenation between us will be limited. This does not mean that concatenation on a limited scale is not preferred to isolation; nor does it mean that examining parts cannot be interesting or that they are unworthy of study and recognition. But examining the parts—the thin wedges of being, of life, of society—is not the only way to study. Nor am I saying that Salish study formations are the only way to learn, the only way to achieve transformation, growth, or maturity. I am saying that we cannot arrive at whole understanding outside of a broadened and deepened framework. We cannot produce the results of study that will lead to the kind of story that will ensure our growth and transformation, lead to human maturity, to life, to freedom. The

colonial system, which still rests squarely on our historic path, stultifies the possibility of concatenation between First Nations peoples and Canadians. The composition of an aggregate picture, a dynamic image of genuine being, and the imagining of the journey from separation to connection—these are the subjects of story and study that can produce freedom.

Instructors are not experts filling up passive empty heads. Students are as responsible for learning as their instructors are for facilitating this process. The student and instructor must be able to differentiate between what is clearly the responsibility of the student in the process of study and what is the responsibility of the instructor in the student's learning. Both must be able to see where teaching ends and internal learning begins. Students must be permitted to respond to education in their own voice. At the same time, critics, instructors, and institutions must respect that the picture First Nations authors advance is true, even if they don't see it that way, that it is half the colonial picture, that what you see may be true, but is not what we see. It may be the other half the picture. The moment we share a commonly constructed picture, a story, then we can begin to pull at the fabric holding the picture together, see its construction, and dismantle and recreate the design. Only then can we collectively recreate a community more human than before. This is the business of study in its totality for us.

From a Salish perspective, study ought to move us beyond the relentless reproduction of our cultural bias and remove the filters blinding our ability to see beyond this bias. In relinquishing the obstacles to new paths, we invite ourselves to this open field of fire we could be. Study requires characters that can challenge us to relinquish the mundane, the perverse, and the repetitive. We need to study stories whose characters and spaces will unlock our confinement and take us on a journey up to those planes of freedom.

The spiritual objective of study is to transform the way we see, to broaden the field of vision, to inspire us to “turn around,” to drink in the images both of the world and the imagination. When we speak to this process, this too is oratory. When we gather thoughts, examine the conditions of our story, represent it as theory, and unveil the processes inherent in the journey of story – all this becomes the speaker’s map to orating the future, and this too is oratory.

Discourse, theory, cognizance, and the transference of knowledge are parts of a creative, oratorical, dramatic, process through which our narrative history and story – oratory – were crafted, understood, and transferred systemically, both locally and nationally. This is what has created the body of knowledge of the nation and shaped the oral tradition, which then the listeners use to govern themselves. Oratory has ensured continuous growth and transformation: a powerful sense of justice, a broad framework for seeing, and a method of study and representation. Holistic thinking and being are the result. *The study of Native literature, then, is a written and oratorical collaborative process of seeing the self and society through story, in which the instructor is the facilitator.*

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