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"Red is the Colour of the Morning: Resurrection in the Writings of Terry Tempest Williams"

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RED IS THE COLOUR OF THE MORNING

Resurrection in the Writing of Terry Tempest Williams

Colleen Carpenter Cullinan

TERRY TEMPEST WILLIAMS TELLS US that she writes to create red in a world that often appears black and white. The language of red, she says, is the language of the desert—the Red Rock Desert of the south-west United States, her home. The language of red is raw and dangerous: it is the language of blood, of heat, of anger. Red is also a colour of joy and of power—it is the colour of Pentecost, of the coming of the Holy Spirit among us in the joy of the resurrection to give us courage, comfort, and the kind of hope we can only represent by picturing a dancing, whirling fire.

To speak of red is to speak of passion. To speak in the language of red is to speak of death and of life—or rather, to shout, to sing and to shake with the power of these things. We will need more than words to understand what Williams is after—much more. We need her rootedness and her sense of place; we need her wonder and her sense of beauty. In the end, we need to learn to see as she does: to see life in the midst of death, to see the joy and the power of resurrection as it shines forth all around us.

Terry Tempest Williams is not a Roman Catholic, yet I find deep resonances between her spirituality and a Catholic sacramental approach to the world. Williams is in fact a Mormon, born and raised in Salt Lake City, where her family's Mormon roots go back five generations. A trained naturalist and an environmental activist, Williams is an award-winning, prolific writer. Her writing is passionate, deeply engaged with the land she loves, and often frankly political. She is not a theologian nor even someone usually identified as a 'religious

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writer'—but her work persistently engages theological questions, especially those associated with suffering, death and new life.

Remembering

In the spring of 2005, as I was first encountering Williams' work, I also heard Bernice Johnson Reagon sing for the first time. The two are thus forever linked in my memory, although they come from profoundly different corners of America and of American culture. Dr Reagon is a singer and songwriter, but is also an African-American historian, a scholar known particularly for her work with African-American oral histories and folklore. She is Distinguished Professor of History Emerita at American University in Washington, DC, and also spent over twenty years as a scholar, folklorist and curator at the Smithsonian Institution. She was a prominent civil rights activist during the 1960s, travelling the country as a Freedom Singer. She is also the founder of the women's *a cappella* group Sweet Honey in the Rock. In 2005 she came to rural western Minnesota (where I was living at the time) to serve as the first Distinguished Visiting Scholar at the University of Minnesota-Morris—which is where I heard her speak, and sing, and lead a choir. I will never forget the power of her voice—nor the passion with which she sang of justice, and of hope.

One of Reagon's songs in particular speaks to me of resurrection hope in the same way that Terry Tempest Williams' writing does. This is a connection I make with some caution, as the song grows out of Reagon's experience as an African-American, and needs to be recognised as a work rooted in that culture, that tradition, and that history—not in Williams' Mormon history, nor in my own Irish-American Catholic tradition and culture. Yet this powerful song speaks to people from many different corners of American history and culture, and indeed speaks to people from beyond our shores altogether. I have always heard echoes of Job's questions in the song, although the clear-eyed, courageous hope evident here stands in stark contrast to Job's repentance in dust and ashes (42:6). Here are the lyrics to 'I Remember, I Believe':

> I don't know how my mother walked her trouble down
> I don't know how my father stood his ground
> I don't know how my people survived slavery
> I do remember, that's why I believe

I don't know why the rivers overflow their banks
I don't know why the snow falls and covers the ground
I don't know why the hurricane sweeps through the land
Every now and then
Standing in a rainstorm, I believe.

I don't know why the angels woke me up this morning soon
I don't know why the blood still runs through my veins
I don't know how I rate to run another day
I am here still running
I believe.

My God calls to me in the morning dew
The power of the universe knows my name
Gave me a song to sing and sent me on my way
I raise my voice for justice, I believe.[1]

As both scholar and composer, Reagon is clearly the best interpreter of this hymn. What I offer here, then, is not an interpretation, but a personal reflection on how her work speaks to me, and how her work connects to issues of hope, resurrection and earthly beauty as I have tried to understand these things as a Catholic theologian.

The song is a lament—and a pledge of determination; it is mournful—and rings with hope; it speaks of the chaotic, tragic past—and claims the power to move towards justice today. Where Augustine sought to believe in order that he might understand, in 'I Remember, I Believe,' Reagon celebrates and offers 'remembering' as a source of belief, as the murky shifting ground that can be the basis of faith. *I don't know*, we hear: *I don't know why*, *I don't know how*, *I don't know*; *I* do *remember* and *I believe*. And what is it that is remembered? *My mother*, *my father*, *my people*; storms and snow; blood and breath—all very concrete, bodily, earthly things. I remember these things even if I did not experience them; I remember them even if I cannot fully grasp how they happened; I remember *in order to bear witness*.

Terry Tempest Williams also remembers. She remembers her mother's struggle with cancer. *I don't know how my mother walked her*

[1] Bernice Johnson Reagon, 'I Remember, I Believe', from the CD *Sacred Ground* (Redway, California: Earthbeat Records, 1995). Currently this song can be heard on YouTube at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sUAbHhlOYhE (accessed 13 August 2009). We are grateful to Bernice Johnson Reagon for her permission to reprint this song in full.


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Terry Tempest Williams

trouble down. She remembers the rising waters of the Great Salt Lake destroying her beloved Bear River bird refuge, which had been a place of connection for her with her mother, with the birds, and with the strange landscape of Utah. *I don't know why the rivers overflow their banks*.

What is it, in the face of death and rising water and any number of other struggles, that enables anyone to affirm so clearly, 'I believe!'? As I hear Reagon's song, and as I read Williams's work, the key lies in memory, in the deep connection between the phrase 'I remember' and 'I believe.' It is memory that undergirds faith—not memory of hardship and tragedy only, but the more dangerous memory of hope and promise *in the midst of* that hardship and tragedy. Memory frees us from 'the omnipotence of the present moment' and enables us to see the world around us in a different way.[2] With memory, especially memory that 'dares to connect with the pain, the beauty, the defeat, the victory of love and freedom, and the unfinished agenda of those who went before', our vision is shaped in such a way that we can glimpse the future as a place where 'something else might indeed be possible'.[3]

All seeing is a matter of editing and focusing in order to make sense of an overwhelming amount of sensory detail: we see by making choices, and we learn to see by recognising familiar and significant patterns, patterns we care about. A hunter sees a different prairie from a

[2] Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Friends of God and Prophets: A Feminist Theological Reading of the Communion of Saints* (New York: Continuum, 1998), 165. Johnson is here discussing the power of dangerous memory as articulated by Johann Baptist Metz.
[3] Johnson, *Friends of God and Prophets*, 165.

landscape painter; a homeless person sees a different city from a tourist. Different details matter; different patterns are significant.

Williams and Reagon both see life in the midst of death. The details they choose to notice and the patterns that make sense to them correspond to the shocking breakthrough of God's life and hope in the midst of the loss and despair that enveloped Christ's friends and disciples when he died. The world is immeasurably complex; seeing life in the midst of death, rather than death in the midst of life or even a senseless, random mixture of the two, *is* a choice, and a dramatic one. It is a choice that only makes sense in a religious framework; and even within the world-view of Christianity, it is a choice that proclaims a particular understanding of our faith, one that is still, perhaps, a minority view.

The living hope pulsing through both Reagon's song and Williams's writing is a dramatic expression of this way of seeing the world, this vision rooted in the memory of resurrection. In order to show this, I will begin with a brief overview of the theology and spirituality of resurrection that I see in these works. I will then go on to discuss *Refuge*, *Red* and *Leap*, and show that the deeply contemplative engagement with the world demanded by Williams in each work calls the reader to a mode of vision, rooted in the hope of the resurrection, that persistently seeks out a fragile new flowering of life in the midst of death. Reagon's song, on the other hand, stands on its own; you will hear echoes of it as I quote Williams, but I will not presume to analyze such a powerful hymn. I do, however, urge you to think of it as often as possible, especially when you find the waters rising around you.

Resurrection

It is possible—and perhaps all too common—to be a Christian and not to see the world through the lens of resurrection hope. For many Christians the crucifixion, rather than the resurrection, is the basic form or pattern that determines what and how they see. They focus on suffering, violence and the power of death, which appear as evidence that this broken world has been condemned by God. Resurrection hope, for these Christians, is not about the world around them, but about the world yet to come: new life is for heaven, not earth. The earth is a place of sin and death, a 'vale of tears'. The life, death and resurrection of Jesus did not, for these Christians, fundamentally

change the world as we know it; they only changed what can happen to us in the *next* world, by opening up the possibility of our forgiveness and acceptance by God. Yet there has been a perceptible shift in the theological understanding of the role and destiny of 'this world', or God's creation, recently, especially in feminist and liberation thought. Instead of relegating hope to what happens either after death or at the end of time, Christian hope takes root in this world, here and now.

In his study of hope entitled *In the End—The Beginning*, Jurgen Moltmann argues that, fascinated and overwhelmed by the great gifts of forgiveness we saw in the death of Christ, we have too long overlooked the meaning and promise of his resurrection. The salvific meaning of Jesus's *resurrection* is something separate and different from the salvific meaning of his death, and has to do not only with forgiveness but with hope, transformation and new life.[4] 'The resurrection is a separate and special act of God's', Moltmann says, 'through which the new world of eternal life is thrown open … [the] dead are born again into a living hope …. With the rule of Christ, God's new creation already begins in the midst of the world of death.'[5]

This new creation is coming to be all around us, even if it still seems that the powers of death trample regularly on hope. The British theologian James Alison likens the current situation of the universe as a whole to that in remote parts of Eastern Europe when the Berlin Wall fell: most things still looked the same, and those in power held on desperately and viciously for a little while, but everyone knew that the game was up. Everything had changed. Similarly with our world: to all appearances, out here in the provinces, death is still running the show—but we know that its power has been broken and we are free. Because of our dangerous memory of resurrection, we see and experience resurrection all around us; we have the joy and hope and courage to work for *more* life in the midst of death. As Moltmann explains it:

> In community with [Jesus], those who follow him in his messianic mission become co-workers for the kingdom …. There are conditions in history which are in obvious contradiction to the kingdom of God and his righteousness and these we have to fight

[4] Jürgen Moltmann, *In the End—The Beginning: The Life of Hope* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 75.
[5] Moltmann, *In the End—The Beginning*, 75–76.

> against. But there are also conditions which are in accord with the kingdom of God, and these we have to promote, and, if we can, bring them into being. We shall then have *parables* of the coming kingdom now, in the present, and shall already anticipate today what will come about on the day of God.[6]

A practical spirituality of resurrection, then, is one that both *sees* and *acts* in the world in a particular way. Those who see with Easter eyes see the *parables* of the coming kingdom, and joyfully embrace the truth of those parables—as they merrily join in the creation of yet more. Moreover, seeing parables of the kingdom requires the fullness of our bodily experience of *creation*, as it requires a cultivation of contemplative engagement with the world around us: we cannot see what we have never bothered to look at, what we do not listen to, what has never touched us. In her writing, Terry Tempest Williams asks us to focus on things at which she has looked at carefully, quietly and patiently for years on end. She asks us to stare at an unfamiliar painting until we can see our own lives portrayed in its depths; she asks us to look at the desert until we can see how it teems with life. And she asks us to stare down death until, with her, we can see that we are required to find love and hope even here—and it *is* here if you know how to look, if you see with Easter eyes, if what and how you see is shaped by the power and joy of resurrection.

Leap

We will begin with *Leap*, perhaps Terry Tempest Williams's strangest book.[7] It is neither a reflection on wilderness and nature, nor on political activism—none of the things for which Williams is best known. Instead, it is an extended reflection—stream of consciousness, with footnotes—on a fifteenth-century painting, Hieronymus Bosch's *The Garden of Delights*. This painting is a triptych, with Paradise to the viewer's left, Hell to the right, and the Garden of Earthly Delights in the centre.

As a child, Williams had become familiar with two parts of the painting—Paradise and Hell, posters of which were hung above her bed by her grandmother—but she was stunned to confront the heart of it, Bosch's portrayal of Earthly Delight, when she visited the painting at

[6] Moltmann, *In the End—The Beginning*, 92.
[7] Terry Tempest Williams, *Leap* (New York: Pantheon, 2000).



The Garden of Earthly Delights, *by Hieronymus Bosch*

the Prado as an adult. Confronting this new (to her) panel of the work shook her to the core: it was 'not only a surprise to me, but a great mystery'.[8] The mystery was the centre—the body, as she points out—of the work, and the role of human bodiliness in God's spiritual universe, and the place of her body and the body of the earth in her understanding of Reality and Love and Hope.

Williams's response to the mystery was to enter into it, deeply and wholly. She stared at the painting—an enormous, complex, detailed

[8] Williams, *Leap*, 7.

work—and tried to take it all in. She refused to blink; her eyes dried out; she grew dizzy and had to turn away to find her footing again. Then she tackled it one detail at a time: she counted cherries, but gave up when she realised that she had reached sixty and had barely begun. She counted birds, and named 35 separate species, including five different owls, before once again giving up. The painting overwhelmed her; she came back, day after day.

Her account of the painting itself is interwoven with the memories it evokes, the theology it proposes, the theology and history she was taught as a Mormon child, the history of her family and of her own life. We read of her marriage, her dreams, her conversations with others in the Prado, long-ago deaths of family members, a vision she had as a teenager after fasting and prayer, and even Procter and Gamble's deliberate destruction of the siesta in Spain. All of this flows in and out of her description of Paradise, of Hell and of the Garden. Often she describes the painting from the inside, riding the horses, climbing the ladders, drifting in a boat, swept away by a whirlwind. She is everywhere; she is living inside a reality quite different from ours—indeed, from her own—yet she is able to make more sense of her life because of her intense, focused, contemplative engagement with the painting.

She loves the painting—she seeks after its truths—because she is convinced that Bosch has 'put his finger on the wound', the central woundedness in human life.[9] That wound—our separation from God—is evident for her not only in the world portrayed by the painting, but in her own life and faith; further, it is embodied in the earth itself, in the destruction of the wild lands she loves, and even in the relentless decay of Bosch's 500-year-old painting. In the book's final section, she visits the painting as it is being restored, and here begins to see the wound in a powerful new way, a way formed by the process of restoration—or resurrection:

> Our wound, separation from the Sacred, the pain of our isolation, may this be the open door that leads us to the table of restoration, may we sit around the table, may we break bread around the table, may we stand on top of the table, may we turn the table over and dance, leap, leap for joy, all this in the gesture of conserving a

[9] Williams, *Leap*, 264.

> painting, conserving a landscape, conserving a spirit, our own restored spirits once lost, now found, Paradise found, right here on this beautiful blue planet called Earth.[10]

Red

If *Leap* is Williams's most mystical work, reflecting on the union of art, self and spirit, then *Red* is the most political of the three books considered here.[11] Its explicitly political, activist content includes not only Williams's testimony before the US Congress in support of the Red Rock Wilderness Act but the text of the act itself. Yet it, too, is ultimately a text of contemplation: the most striking passages of the book describe a union with the desert itself, a vision of one's very blood transformed into the red sand of the Red Rock Desert. And it is contemplation that grounds Williams's activism to save these desert lands: she would not be working this hard to save something she did not know intimately and love fiercely—and both her knowledge and her love are fruits of the tender attention of long contemplation.

Red also focuses on the need for story, especially for creation stories as these are the ones that tell us about the land that gave us birth and what our relationship to that land should be. In the end, *Red* exists as a story of hope in the midst of destruction, a parable of resurrection through which we might continue to see the workings of God's new life in the world.

Red opens with stories, moves on to essays, newspaper clippings, poetry, transcripts of congressional testimony, and meditations on earth, water, fire, air, light and the colour red itself; and concludes with reflections on what Williams calls 'wild mercy'.[12] The jumble of differing forms is neither haphazard nor accidental; rather, Williams is striving to create a wide-open, complex, heart-centred form of writing that will adequately reflect her understanding of the wilderness.

[10] Williams, *Leap*, 265.

[11] Terry Tempest Williams, *Red: Passion and Patience in the Desert* (New York: Vintage, 2002).

[12] Williams does not explicitly define 'wild mercy' but uses the phrase to title her reflections on 9/11. The disconnected, scattered paragraphs become a reflection on fear, grace and wilderness—specifically, the desert wilderness near her home where giant 'thumper trucks' destroy the landscape in their search for oil. 'To protect what is wild is to protect what is gentle', she concludes. 'Perhaps the wildness we fear is the pause between our own heartbeats, the silent space that says we live only by grace. Wilderness lives by this same grace. Wild mercy is in our hands ….' (*Red*, 229) See the entire final section of *Red,* 215–229.

> I want to write my way from the margins to the centre. I want to speak the language of the grasses, rooted yet soft and supple in the presence of wind before a storm. I want to write in the form of migrating geese like an arrow pointing south towards a direction of safety. I want to keep my words wild so that even if the land and everything we hold dear is destroyed by shortsightedness and greed, there is a record of beauty and passionate participation by those who saw what was coming.[13]

In *Red*, Williams calls us to see the desert, to let her record of wild beauty become part of our memory too. To those of us too short-sighted to see what she sees, she patiently explains what is there, what we have failed to see:

> Think about the hundreds of species of birds and mammals on the plateau … white-throated swifts, violet-green swallows, ravens, coyote, mountain lion, and mule deer. We may see them, we may not. Always, they are watching. Turkey vultures are watching …. When one of us says, 'Look, there's nothing out there', what we are really saying is, '*I cannot see*'.[14]

Williams describes *Red* as 'a gesture and bow to [her] homeland',[15] which she sees as central to who she is—as our homelands are, indeed, to who we all are as human beings. We cannot separate ourselves from the land, much as we might like to. 'Each of us belongs to a particular landscape, one that informs who we are, a place that carries our history, our dreams', she says.[16] And if we spend enough time getting to know that land, we will come to understand it as a place where God is revealed to us. Few still speak of 'the Book of Nature' as revelatory of God, but Williams does. Moreover, she believes that spiritual strength and courage, what she describes as 'spiritual resistance, [or] the ability to stand firm at the centre of our convictions when everything around us asks us to concede … comes from the deep quiet of listening to the land, the river, the rocks'.[17] Be quiet, Williams tells us. Listen. Watch. See. And you *will* see the living desert … and you will see glimpses of the day of God.

[13] Williams, *Red*, 19.
[14] Williams, *Red*, 68–69.
[15] Williams, *Red*, 19.
[16] Williams, *Red*, 19.
[17] Williams, *Red*, 17.

Refuge

It is one thing to sit in contemplation before a painting, and even to sit in contemplation in a desert canyon, and open yourself to the beauty before your eyes. It is quite another to sit in contemplation—and confrontation—with death, and seek life and beauty even there. *Refuge*, perhaps Williams's most popular work, attempts just that.[18] *Refuge* is the story of the death of Williams's mother, Diane Dixon Tempest, and the drowning of the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge—a place Williams had loved and shared with her mother—over the course of a long and painful year.

'Most of the women in my family are dead', Williams tells us matter-of-factly in the prologue to her book. 'Cancer. At thirty-four, I became the matriarch of my family.'[19] Most of *Refuge* wrestles painfully with grief, with loss and its anticipation, with desperate and futile human efforts to control the processes of earth—the rising of the waters, the growth of the cancers. And then, at an odd point structurally in her story—not in the centre, not at the end, but a bit over two-thirds of the way through—Williams records, in breath-by-breath detail, her mother's death.

> Our eyes met … I moved from the chaise across the room and sat cross-legged on the bed next to her. I took her right hand in mine and whispered, 'Okay, Mother, let's do it …'
>
> I began breathing with her … Mother and I became one. One breathing organism. Everything we had ever shared in our lives manifested itself in this moment, in each breath. Here and now.
>
> I was stunned by the way her eyes fixed on mine—the duet we were engaged in ….
>
> I feel joy. I feel love. I feel her love for me, for all of us, for her life and her birth, the rebirth of her soul.
>
> I say to Steve, 'She's going … she's going'
>
> He sits next to her and takes her other hand …. Her eyes focus on mine with total joy—a fullness that transcends words …
>
> Dad and Brooke are home. A few more breaths … one last breath—Dad walks into the room. Mother turns to him. Their eyes meet. She smiles. And she goes ….

[18] Terry Tempest Williams, *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place* (New York: Vintage, 1992).
[19] Williams, *Refuge*, 3.

> I stood by Brooke. I felt as though I had been midwife to my mother's birth.[20]

And yet this birth is accompanied by mourning—deep, painful, prolonged mourning. Williams admits in the prologue that she has been in retreat for the seven years since her mother's death, and that *Refuge* is her return to life. And this, perhaps, is why her mother's death is not at a structurally significant point of her story: for seven years, it lay at the centre, or at the end, of her understanding, but now it has shifted, been displaced. It has become part of the story, but it no longer crowds out everything else. The chapter at the centre of *Refuge*, in fact, records Diane's request to her daughter to help her through her death,[21] and Terry's inability to answer. It also includes this scene, which is, perhaps, Terry's answer to her mother:

> The light begins to deepen. It is sunset … [Mother] takes my hand and whispers, 'Will you give me a blessing?' In Mormon religion, formal blessings of healing are given by men through the Priesthood of God. Women have no outward authority. But within the secrecy of sisterhood we have always bestowed benisons upon our families. Mother sits up. I lay my hands upon her head and in the privacy of women, we pray.[22]

Prayer, then, is at the centre of *Refuge*. Prayer in the privacy of women; prayer as the sun sets. When Williams realises that this—and not the death, not the loss—is at the heart of her story, *Refuge* becomes possible. *Refuge* is then able to take shape as a parable of life in the midst of death, as a lesson in what to look at and how to see when resurrection is the truth of the world but death has not yet conceded the fight.

Coming Home

With Williams, we can learn contemplation. We can gaze at the Red Rock Desert until we too 'learn humility in the face of Creation, reverence in the presence of God', and the simple truth that 'we are not separate. We belong to a much larger community than we know. We are

[20] Williams, *Refuge*, 231.
[21] Williams, *Refuge*, 156.
[22] Williams, *Refuge*, 158.

here because of love.'[23] Yet we do not need to travel to the Red Rock Desert of Utah to learn such things, to see the world this way.

I believe that, in the end, Williams is not telling us to contemplate her desert at all. 'Each of us belongs to a particular landscape', she reminds us.[24] Thus we need to root ourselves in our own homes as thoroughly as she has rooted herself in hers if we too wish to see parables of God's kingdom. We need to pay attention to the truth of where we are, and learn to see the place with Easter eyes, no matter where we travel. A contemplative spirituality, rooted in resurrection faith, is one that knows that parables of the kingdom are not only to be found in beautiful far-away places, nor long-ago far-away places, but here, where we live now, where we need to learn to see our own parables of the coming day of God.

We need to root ourselves in our own homes

Only two years ago, I moved to the city from rural western Minnesota, a place that, in many ways, reeks of death. It had taken me a long time to see resurrection happening in the isolated, unappreciated, dying farm communities; during my first few years there, I would have laughed at the notion. The towns are shrinking; the people are leaving; what farm animals there are are housed in crowded and sickly factory-farm conditions; the waters are being poisoned by chemical runoff and sewage; and the land is being devoured by the poisons of industrial, chemically based agriculture. A farmer friend of mine shuddered as she described driving north from Iowa to her home near mine: 'It was nothing but a sea of monocultural crops for miles and miles on end. It was like looking at death for hours.' And yet, before I left, I had stopped seeing my surroundings as a hopeless wasteland. I lived there long enough to take a better look at it; I began to pay attention to who stayed and why; I learnt some of the history—Native American, Norwegian, Icelandic and Irish—and I had at last come to see that here, too, there are parables of resurrection to be seen.

As is true in the Red Rock Desert—and everywhere else, for that matter—death only appears to be winning if you choose to ignore the life and resurrection that persistently overwhelm it. Certainly, monoculture industrial farming is the rule in Minnesota—but organic farmers are gaining ground every year. In fact, an organization called

[23] Williams, *Red*, 70–71.
[24] Williams, *Red*, 19.

MOSES (Midwest Organic and Sustainable Educational Services) awarded its 2005 Organic Farmer of the Year award to Carmen and Sally Fernholz, who farm only a few miles from my former home.[25] The shrinking school district manages to host about a dozen international students every year—not to mention working on innovative programmes and strategies to care for emotionally and physically disabled children, thus becoming a magnet in the region for children with special needs. I was surrounded by poets, potters, singers and artists, all of whom seem to spend a fair amount of time contemplating the prairie—which is, by the way, a beautiful and strange place, with a wildness and fury all its own. As Bernice Johnson Reagon sang, 'My God calls to me in the morning dew'—and once we too see that in our own homes, in our own place, then we will also be able to recognise the resurrections happening all around us. We will, with Williams, speak the language of red—of Pentecost red—and we will know how to answer when she speaks these words:

> I am home in the desert. There are steep canyons before me carved away by water, by wind. I see an opening in the Earth. I feel an opening in my heart. My hands cradle red dirt and I watch it slip through my fingers, creating a small rise on the land. To be present, completely present, in these tender and uncertain days. This is my prayer: to gather together, to speak freely, to question and be questioned, to love and be loved, to feel the pulse, this seismic pulse—it will guide us beyond fear.[26]

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[25] Notice the name of the organization: MOSES. Calling an organic farming organization 'Moses' is no accident. These are people who know exactly what the religious implications are, and who are very serious about the desert in which we are wandering as farmers and consumers, and the promised land towards which we are ever so slowly walking. It is a tremendous sign of hope.

[26] Williams, *Red*, 223.