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To cite this article: Laura Castor (2021) 'Our combined voices are a chorus': grief and survivance in Linda Hogan's *Solar Storms*, *Textual Practice*, 35:3, 449-466, DOI: [10.1080/0950236X.2021.1886696](https://doi.org/10.1080/0950236X.2021.1886696)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0950236X.2021.1886696>



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Published online: 12 Feb 2021.



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'Our combined voices are a chorus': grief and survivance in Linda Hogan's *Solar Storms*

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ABSTRACT

While Linda Hogan scholars generally agree that in her literature of environmental justice, grieving the effects of colonised territory and culture can motivate characters to confront oppressive authority figures, scholars have not considered how representations of grief in Hogan's novels are themselves significant political acts worthy of analysis. In this article, I argue that Hogan's narrator Angel in her novel *Solar Storms* shows that grieving is central to Native survivance and environmental justice. In this essay, I utilise a theoretical framework based on the concepts of Native survivance and grievability to suggest how Hogan's novel uses narrative perspective and imagery to represent the role of grief in transforming victimry to survivance for the intergenerational political community of the novel. In addition, I situate the historical James Bay Project in the context of the environmental justice work of *Solar Storms*.

ARTICLE HISTORY Received 29 January 2020; Accepted 25 January 2021

KEYWORDS Environmental justice literature; survivance; grievability; Indigenous epistemology; James Bay project; Linda Hogan

Many people think that grief is privatizing, that it returns us to a solitary situation and is, in that sense, depoliticizing. But I think it furnishes a sense of political community of a complex order.

-Judith Butler¹

Is there something to be gained from grieving, from tarrying with grief, from remaining exposed to its unbearable and not endeavoring to seek a resolution for grief through violence?

-Judith Butler²

The Chickasaw writer Linda Hogan has been writing climate fiction for decades, long before the term was popularised by Dan Bloom in 2008.³ She is among the writers who regard fiction as a ground for social action,

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who are committed to what the ecocritic Joni Adamson terms the literature of environmental justice. Environmental justice literature does more than dream of a lost pastoral landscape in a contemporary North America defined more accurately by what it wastes than what it produces.⁴ Rather, the characters in the literature of environmental justice 'are capable of representing themselves and their people from their own perspective, persons not afraid to cross boundaries, make decisions, confront authority figures, and contend with violence'.⁵ In Hogan's *Solar Storms*, the seventeen-year-old narrator and her three grandmothers make an arduous, risky, and dreamlike canoe journey north to the centre of a protest against river diversions and the construction of a dam. Twenty-five years after the publication of the novel, which is based loosely on the protest against the James Bay hydroelectric project in Quebec in its early phases in the 1970s, its political message about the need to resist extractivist projects could not be more relevant: Whereas in 1995 the scientific community largely agreed that 'there seems to be a connection between human intervention and climate change', by December 2019, at the Madrid COP25 Climate Conference, experts noted that 'in many (but not all) ways, the scientific consensus has under-estimated the rate, magnitude, and/or extent of climate impacts both on human systems and the natural environment'.⁶

In this article, I argue that for Hogan's narrator Angel, grieving is central to engaging effectively in a political community committed to Native survivance and environmental justice. The article is organised in three main sections. In section one, I introduce the terms central to my analysis: Gerald Vizenor's notion of survivance and Judith Butler's concept of grievability. In section two, I draw on Butler and Vizenor's insights in exploring selected passages from the novel to suggest how Hogan develops narrative perspective and imagery to make vivid the lives of an intergenerational community of characters engaged in Native survivance, or, as in the case of the character of Angel's mother Hannah, the lives of victims who do not survive. In Section three, I situate the historical James Bay Project in relation to Hogan's environmental justice work in the novel.

A number of Hogan scholars have discussed the ways in which Hogan represents the legacy of resistance to colonisation represented by the James Bay Project in *Solar Storms*;⁷ her integration of Indigenous epistemology in the narrative structure;⁸ her use of imagery to suggest pan-Indigenous approaches to resisting settler state policies;⁹ and her flexible use of the mourning feast traditions as a way of exposing the famine caused by white settlers.¹⁰ Anthropologists, sociologists, and psychologists agree that grief is one of the few rites of passage shared historically, cross-culturally, and transnationally; in the twentieth century, scholars of grief studies have developed a large body of literature in the social sciences, including recent examinations of grief activism.¹¹ Among literary scholars interested in Indigenous

peoples' issues, the phenomena of generational and historical trauma have received growing attention. To my knowledge, however, there have been no studies of Hogan's *Solar Storms* that examine Hogan's representations of embodied grieving not as precursors to activism, but explicitly as political acts.¹²

Recognising the transformative power of grief as social action is increasingly important in our time of climate emergency, when many activists and writers feel a sense of urgency to do anything, as quickly as possible, to address the problem of planetary survival. Sometimes the urgency includes the sense that there is no time to lose in feeling fear, anger, and grief, and that enacting strategies for some form of mitigation is preferable to taking the time to understand the priorities of local residents of communities most directly impacted. Yet as Potawatomi philosopher and environmental justice scholar Kyle Whyte observes, many mitigation initiatives by well-meaning, Western-trained experts paradoxically continue to reinvent the patterns of settler-state colonisation when they do not see the depth of their investment in the status quo that values efficiency over reflection and affect.¹³ Hogan's novel suggests how Angel unlearns her own implication in the status quo, as its victim.

Native survivance and grievability

Central to Hogan's perspective on resisting the destruction of life and well-being represented by extractivist projects such as James Bay is the discourse of Native 'survivance'.¹⁴ The Anishinaabe storyteller, theorist, and scholar Gerald Vizenor reverses Jacques Derrida's use of the term as an indeterminate space between life and death that does not include human agency. In Vizenor's Indigenous characterisation introduced in *Manifest Manners: Narratives on Postindian Survivance* (1999), he resists the notion that Native Americans are victims of the legacy of colonisation who lack the social and political resources to fight back against the process Rob Nixon calls the 'slow violence' of climate and other forms of injustice.¹⁵

Vizenor intentionally resists providing a clear definition of Native survivance. To do so would be to replicate the settler state pattern of assessing, categorising and trying to control the production of Indigenous knowledge. Vizenor instead describes the recognisable signs of survivance as 'an active sense of presence over absence, deracination, and oblivion; it is the continuance of stories, not a mere reaction, however pertinent. Survivance is greater than the right of a survivable name'.¹⁶ Some critics, such as Alan Velie, interpret the word as a combination of 'survival' and 'endurance', while others, such as Jace Weaver, translate it as 'survival' and 'resistance'. What matters for Vizenor is that the '-al' changes to '-ance' at the end of 'survival': Changing the narrative of victimry begins with the way in which the problem

is named and who names it. Native practitioners insist on an active survival that responds creatively to a particular set of obstacles, not survival as merely hanging on to life on settler state terms. Vizenor states, '[t]he nature of survivance creates a sense of narrative resistance to absence, literary tragedy, nihilism, and victimry', as the discourses of survivance defy definition, and become 'obvious and unmistakable in their storied expression'.¹⁷

Hogan's storied expressions of survivance in *Solar Storms* are motivated by the intention to contribute to a global 'chorus, a movement toward life' as she and others see what is happening in the world.¹⁸ The novel contributes to this movement through its multilayered representations of Native survivance grounded in Indigenous epistemologies. Indigenous epistemologies affirm the interconnected mental, emotional, physical, social, and spiritual dimensions of lived experience in community, where time is conceived as spiral and multidirectional, space is spherical, and all animate beings have particular intelligences. Cooperation for group continuance is valued over competition for individual recognition.¹⁹ Indigenous epistemologies refuse to flatten the world conceptually through philosophical Cartesian binary oppositions between subjects and objects. They resist the Enlightenment-based liberal economic assumptions of individual 'natural rights' to life, liberty, and the pursuit of property articulated in John Locke's 1690 *Treatise of Government*, and applied through the ideology of American exceptionalism.²⁰ Exceptionalism in its various expressions, such as Manifest Destiny, has justified the dominant Euroamerican culture's acquisition of the earth's mineral, wind, water, and agricultural resources, and its genocide of Indigenous peoples. It has also contributed to the inability of many in the dominant culture to regard, either consciously or unconsciously, the lives of black, brown, and Indigenous people as grievable.²¹

Judith Butler's approach to grievability, the social imaginary's capacity to recognise a life as worthy, can be understood in the framework of Indigenous epistemology and Native survivance. For Butler, grief can function as a transformative practice that challenges the basis of the Enlightenment philosophy of individual rights underlying extractivism.²² Grief dissolves the boundaries between self and other in moments of loss when one undergoes an experience outside of one's control to find that 'one is beside oneself, not at one with oneself'.²³ It seems fitting that the figurative expression of being 'beside oneself with grief' conceives of grief as a companion on a journey into uncharted territory. Butler adds, '[p]erhaps we can say that grief contains the possibility of apprehending a mode of dispossession that is fundamental to who I am'.²⁴ Grief does not call into question the fact of autonomy, but it does provide a context for autonomy as contained within the embodied impermanence of existence: 'we are, from the start and by virtue of being a bodily being, already given over, beyond ourselves, implicated in lives that are not our own'.²⁵ For Hogan's narrator Angel and her grandmothers,

the losses they witness on the canoe journey make painfully real the ways in which the lives of humans and non-humans are implicated in each other's dying.

Butler asks, '[i]f we stay with the sense of loss, are we left feeling only passive and powerless as some might fear? Or are we, rather, returned to a sense of human vulnerability, to our collective responsibility for the physical lives of one another?'²⁶ she continues, '[t]o grieve, and to make grief itself a resource for politics, is not to be resigned to inaction, but it may be understood as the slow process by which we develop a point of identification with suffering itself.'²⁷ Butler's call to stay with a sense of corporal vulnerability is a call to resist the Cartesian mindset that perpetuates the process of othering. It is a call to recognise that globally, vulnerability to violence is unevenly distributed.²⁸

Narrative perspective and imagery of survivance in *Solar Storms*

In the novel, Angel's journey can be read as a process of mental decolonisation that includes the emerging capacity to stay with the sense of the corporal vulnerability she recognises in herself, in the bodies of the other characters, and in the land of her ancestors, the fictional 'Fat-Eaters' who resemble the Inuit.²⁹ Deciding to break from a history of running from abuse and a series of foster home placements, Angel locates the name of her great-grandmother, Agnes, in a court record. She travels north from Oklahoma to Adam's Rib, a village in the Minnesota Boundary Waters near the Canadian border, to begin a metamorphosis of consciousness as a person connected to the land, water, and community rather than driven by fear, anger, and flight. Angel arrives with 'all my worldly goods' in two plastic bags, prepared to meet Agnes at her house at Adam's Rib. The irony in the name 'Adam's Rib' is that Agnes and the other women in the surrounding area are far from dependent for their existence on a figurative Adam or Judeo-Christian God of the Biblical creation story of Genesis. Nor does the topography resemble a pristine Garden of Eden. The land around Adam's Rib is a 'maze of lakes and islands' similar to the Boundary Waters of northern Minnesota, with the sound of loons and 'tree-shaded places' in a 'maze of lakes and islands'.³⁰ Approaching Agnes's house, Angel breathes 'the scent of long, wet grasses and the stronger smell of all towns that live by fish and by seasons'.³¹ The passage connects Angel to a living world through the sensory awareness of breath and smell, rather than privileging the sense of sight most prominent in Enlightenment-based epistemology.

An important catalyst for her ability to connect her own vulnerable body with the corporal vulnerability of others is the news carried by two men in

canoes who arrive to warn the community about several dams being built to the north. Asking for help in stopping the construction, they explain that already in the first flooding, thousands of caribou and geese have been killed, medicinal plants needed by the local residents had disappeared, people had been forced to move overnight after being informed they had no rights to their land, and that plans for extracting minerals on the land before it was flooded were underway. The river diversions, according to the visitors, will affect land as far south as Adam's Rib.³²

Angel soon joins her three grandmothers on a long, arduous canoe voyage north to the centre of the protest in the Canadian Two-Town. Of the four women, Bush, a Chickasaw from Oklahoma and the first wife of Angel's maternal grandfather, is the most single-mindedly committed to joining the protest. Dora-Rouge, Angel's great-grandmother of the Fat-Eater people, was born in Two-Town and wants to return there to die in peace; Agnes travels in support of Dora-Rouge, her mother, while Angel wants to learn the truth about Hannah, her estranged mother, who is living in Two-Town. Along the river, Angel narrates her actions as part of a deeper shift in consciousness that happens gradually through the stories Dora-Rouge tells that show, for example, how moving water is an expression of 'God'. She learns to see 'God' not as the punishing paternalistic figure of the Genesis creation story, but as 'everything beneath my feet, everything surrounded by water; [...] the air, and there was no such thing as empty space'.³³ Time, for Angel, is becoming not only a conceptual chronological notion, but also a transition sensed as a 'gap between worlds' where the boundaries between light and dark, water, air, and land dissolve.³⁴ Within the Indigenous epistemological worldview Hogan evokes in this passage, time is part of a continuous process of creating, living, and dying. Creation for Indigenous peoples who keep to their ancestors' ways is quite different from the Judeo-Christian notion that begins at a single moment controlled by a God who figuratively and literally hovers above his creation.

As the women journey north, not only do Bush's maps no longer represent the patterns of changed land and water the women need to navigate, but the changes they see are often unbearable. Angel describes, for example, 'missing islands', 'rivers dwindled to mudflats', and 'an entire river to the north flooded and drowned'.³⁵ When Agnes becomes ill, Angel goes looking for the medicinal herbs she needs but arrives back to find that her great-grandmother has already died; soon after this loss, the three women witness a moose sinking in a mudflat in a place where a lake had once been.³⁶ Just as in their inability to save Agnes, their grief for the creature they are not able to rescue is made vivid in the image of the moose crying out 'with a woman-sounding cry, and finally, it was embraced and held by a hungry earth with no compassion for it'.³⁷

It is becoming apparent that the dam construction represents a disregard for the relationships that support the continuation of human and non-human life:

Those with the money, the investments, the city power, had no understanding of the destruction their decisions and wants and desires brought to the world. If they'd known what their decisions meant to our people, and if they continued with this building in spite of that knowing, then they were evil. They were the cannibals who consumed human flesh, set fire to worlds the gods had loved and asked the humans to care for.³⁸

Hogan's ironic image of the earth holding and embracing the moose as a mother would, and then consuming the creature, parallels the hunger for profit driving the dam building, and the lack of understanding Angel's mother has for her daughter. Whereas many of the characters in *Solar Storms* use grief as a resource for creating community in the midst of the precarious conditions of their collective lives, Hannah is a marked exception. Hannah, who inherits her own mother Loretta's condition, represents victimry at an extreme. An analysis of Angel's relationship with Hannah during the final weeks of her life suggests how victimry as an obstacle to survival can be transformed through grief.

Angel learns from Bush that Loretta came from the community at Elk Island that had been poisoned by the cyanide-laced carcasses of deer that settlers had left for wolves. Deprived of a mother who knew how to care for her, Hannah inherited the psychological, mental, and spiritual violence done to Loretta. To Hannah's neighbours, she was a dangerous person who embodied the traits of the mythical wiindigoo. In Cree and Anishinaabe mythologies, a wiindigoo is a cannibal-like figure whose ravenous appetite for food, sex, or money has figuratively frozen his or her heart, rendering the wiindigoo incapable of empathy. Traditionally, the wiindigoo is beyond reform or redemption and must be killed, preferably by a member of the wiindigoo's family. Hogan rewrites that practice in *Solar Storms*, as Angel takes care of her mother as she dies. Hogan also questions the traditional practice in characterising the man who fatally stabbed Hannah as himself damaged psychologically, socially, and spiritually by his experience at a residential school.³⁹ The stories Angel hears from her grandmothers and Hannah's neighbours in Two-Town become part of a metanarrative that helps her make sense of the psychological illness for which her mother and her mother's lover were not to blame, as well as the extractivist drive for profit at any cost. Hannah's psychological problems are apparent when, at their first meeting in Two-Town, she is not even able to look at Angel, but can only say, 'I never hit you'. When Angel next sees Hannah in her house outside the town, Angel changes the mythical story in that not only does she stay beside her mother, but Angel also then prepares the body for burial with the meagre resources available in the house.

The figure Angel meets in Hannah's shabby house has dry lips, teeth caked in what looks like dried blood, and foul breath; she is not the threat that Angel feared.⁴⁰ Hannah's body does, however, mirror the ravaged landscape. When Angel removes her boots after Hannah dies, she finds toes painted red, and chipped. There are burn scars on the tops of her feet, just as in the view from the helicopter when Angel arrives in Two-Town, which reminds her of 'a cigarette burn on the face of the world'.⁴¹ Given Hannah's battered body, Angel is disturbed when the residents of the neighbourhood comment that she looks like her mother, and that the reason Hannah disfigured Angel's face was because of their resemblance. Angel's choice to literally and figuratively face her mother is, as Vizenor describes survivance, an act of 'refusing [her mother's internalized and projected] victimry, absence, and nihility'.⁴²

As a place where the intergenerational memory of genocide is made visible, Hannah's body represents a place where memory can also be remade through Angel's simple, conscious actions. Angel's initial sense of disorientation in the presence of her dying mother, small and vulnerable, becomes a bridge to a deeper understanding of the need for protesting the dam: After wrapping her mother's body in cloth, she and Bush, who has arrived by helicopter to help with the preparation, need to lay her on newspaper, 'on words of war, obituaries, stories of carnage and misery, and true stories that had been changed to lies'.⁴³ Staying with the disorientation not of having to defend herself against a dangerous perpetrator, but instead of meeting her mother in the corporal vulnerability of dying, Angel might ask a question similar to Butler's: 'What is the Other that I have lost?' Butler notes that the sense of vulnerability that infants have at birth, and that one recognises in the process of dying, is a quality of being that precedes the idea of an autonomous 'I'. 'This is a condition of being laid bare from the start with which we cannot argue'.⁴⁴ Butler's analysis is relevant to Angel's experience of her mother's vulnerability:

We cannot understand vulnerability as a deprivation [...] unless we understand the need that is thwarted. The condition of being given over to the touch of the other, even if there is no other there, and no support for our lives, signifies a primary helplessness and need, one to which any society must attend.⁴⁵

Hannah's scarred body alludes to the corporal security she had been denied when she was conceived by her own mother, Loretta, after the actions of settlers had poisoned her community on Elk Island. From the perspective of Angel's witness to her mother's condition 'laid bare', she sees how the violence of the dam builders with their 'bulldozers, logging machines, and security police in bulletproof vests carrying semiautomatic weapons' is part of the intergenerational trauma that Hannah internalised and

perpetrated.⁴⁶ As Angel recognises her power to imagine and understand, she connects the land with her own thwarted needs in childhood, and her resilient body:

It was a raw and scarred place, a land that had learned to survive, even to thrive, on harshness. [...] Everything had become strengthened by the desperate and hungry needs, and by the tracts of running water. Like me, it was native land and it had survived. And in time it would become an angry land.⁴⁷

Hogan connects Hannah's wiindigoo story to contemporary events and processes, suggesting how both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples may perpetrate larger systemic fears. Like Hannah, the builders and the infrastructure of the dam project embody the wiindigoo's inability to regard the lives of the local residents as grievable.⁴⁸ A scene toward the end of the novel illustrates the attitude:

Auntie stood up to speak. 'We've been here for thousands of years.' Her hands shook with anger. 'We don't want your dams.' She sounded calmer than she looked, and I was proud of her. She sounded just good! But after she spoke her strong words, the man [a representative from the dam project] called us remnants of the past and said that he wanted to bring us into the twentieth century. My stomach turned at his words, a sick feeling inside me. He, like the others, believed that we were ignorant. It hadn't occurred to those men that Tulik knew every plant and its use, knew the tracks of every animal, and was a specialist in justice and peace. Or that Mr. Dinn, a neighbor of Tulik's, was a knife maker and a weather predictor. Luce was an intellectual, more well-read than they were or even their wives. Auntie a snowshoe maker, a trapper.⁴⁹

In the passage above, the multiple intelligences of the community are dismissed by the company representative as irrelevant, an attitude that Whyte notes that many self-proclaimed allies of Indigenous peoples unconsciously share. For Whyte, because Indigenous peoples continue to survive their ancestors' dystopias, they also have a collective memory that includes the knowledge they need to face the current climate emergency.⁵⁰ However, Michi Saagig Nishnaabeg scholar, writer, and artist Leanne Betasamosake Simpson would add that these resources are often not acknowledged by Indigenous people themselves, because they, like Angel at the beginning of the novel, have been socialised into Western liberal paradigms of cognitive imperialism: 'We are unable to *see* [our Ancestors'] philosophies and their strategies of mobilization'. Simpson notes that when resistance is defined only as large-scale political mobilisation, 'we miss much of what has kept our languages, cultures, and systems of governance alive'.⁵¹ At the end of the novel, the commitment Angel makes to raising the infant half-sister she finds in Hannah's house is a good example of Simpson's view that '[w]e have [our languages, cultures, and systems of governance] today

because our Ancestors often acted within the family unit to physically survive, to pass on what they could to their children, to occupy and use our lands as we always had'.⁵²

The cultural work of Hogan's novel can be understood in terms of representing the ways in which a community mobilises, not only for a particular political action, but for long-term resilience. In a large sense, the community of characters in the novel embodies the Indigenous sense of time Angel describes along the river as a 'gap between worlds' of colonisation and survival.⁵³ Community represents a present and invisible network of relationships that include the intergenerational family of Aurora, Angel, Hannah, Loretta, Bush, Agnes, Dora-Rouge, the numerous life forms disappearing along the rivers, the people at the Two-Town settlements, and readers, who participate in the narrative vicariously, in a 'gap' between their collective memories of ancestral wisdom and a precarious future. The community also includes the human suffering in Two-Town, where Angel sees people with 'puffy faces and empty eyes', 'young children [who] drank alcohol and sniffed glue and paint'. It was 'murder of the soul that was taking place there. Murder with no consequences to the killers. If anything, they were rewarded'.⁵⁴ As Angel witnesses Dora-Rouge grieving for the Two-Town she remembers from her childhood, Angel participates in the grief of their ancestors.⁵⁵

For Angel and for Hogan, '[t]ears have a purpose. They are what we carry of ocean, and perhaps we must become sea, give ourselves to it, if we are to be transformed'.⁵⁶ Grieving is indeed more than a private matter. As Angel's relationship with her dying mother suggests, grief is a form of activism that infuses her resistance to the dam construction. 'Once we started our act of defiance, we couldn't quit', she observes, '[b]ecause not to stand in [the way of the dam builders] was a greater loss when they were making new geographics'.⁵⁷ Angel and the others in the protest act, not with the hope that the protest will lead to consensus with the neoliberal authority figures, but as part of work to 'create complex communities in precarious encounters', as Maurice Stierl characterises grief activism.⁵⁸

Representing the James Bay project's 'reorganization of a world'

Dominick LaCapra's discussion of fictional truth is helpful for understanding the role of grieving in the novel in relation to the hydroelectric project outside the novel. For LaCapra, one of the ways fiction is truthful is that it offers metaphors that relate either directly or indirectly to documented events and processes. LaCapra notes that literary discourses provide insight into the phenomenon of extractivism by offering an interpretation

of a process or period at the level of lived experience that is not possible within the methodological parameters of academic disciplines.⁵⁹ Whereas environmental activists often cite the need to ‘save the world for our children’, Hogan’s novel urges readers to consider, ‘*Whose world is being saved for future generations?*’

For Angel in *Solar Storms*, the continuation of life for future generations, beginning with the child she finds in her mother’s house, depends on her survival as an ‘active sense of presence’ over the absence of a caring mother. By extension, Angel enacts an active sense of presence in the face of settler state ideas that her people ‘had no history’ and ‘lived surrounded by what they saw as nothingness’.⁶⁰ In the world outside the text, the James Bay, located at the southern tip of the Hudson Bay, is part of North America’s largest river drainage system. The Hudson Bay’s ‘nothingness’ includes forests, lakes, and peat bogs, territory never ceded by the Indigenous inhabitants of the territory because the European powers regarded it as absent of useful resources. For centuries it has been a habitat for numerous mammals including beaver and caribou, and a refuge for migratory birds.⁶¹

In 1971, Canadian Cree communities living near the James Bay had not been consulted, nor any environmental impact studies conducted, when the utility company Hydro-Québec, working with the provincial Quebecois and Canadian national governments, began constructing its massive dam project on the James Bay. Government and corporate advocates, citing the ‘absence of concrete, identifiable damage’ and the legal designation of water as a ‘common property resource’, argued that the project would be a ‘green energy’ source. It would mitigate the harmful effects of fossil fuel production by freeing Quebec from its dependence on oil- and coal-fired electric generators to decrease hot-house gas emissions, and therefore acid rain. They added that it was the only practical way to meet the energy needs of Eastern North Americans.⁶² In short, the interests of the Cree and Inuit communities most immediately and negatively impacted were considered irrelevant to those with the institutional power to follow through with the construction.

Matthew Coon Come, grand chief and chairman of the Grand Council of the Crees, notes that from the early phases of the project’s rerouting of the LaGrande and Eastmain Rivers, its reorganisation of a vast area of land has had catastrophic effects on local people and on numerous non-human species.⁶³ Local residents of the villages along the James Bay lost their homes when they were forced to relocate, as well as their livelihoods, which had been based on caribou hunting and fishing, and they developed multiple health crises, including severe neurological diseases, alcoholism, and domestic violence, as well as increased murder and suicide rates.⁶⁴ Angel describes these effects when she notes, ‘[the residents of Two-Town] were despondent, many had to be held back from killing themselves’.⁶⁵ The local communities of the James Bay suffered the ‘slow violence’ Nixon

characterises as ‘a violence of delayed destruction’ that spreads through time and place across the world for marginalised groups.⁶⁶ For Angel, ‘slow violence’ has the face and body of children with her own infants, ‘left untouched, untended by their child-parents’, infants given beer when they cried because ‘it was the only medicine left for all that pain’.⁶⁷ The fictional truths Hogan represents become embodied pain for her characters. For her readers, the images provide an opening for developing a ‘point of identification with suffering itself’, as Butler puts it, and for exposing the reader’s implicit assumption that as humans, we are collectively responsible for the lives of one another.⁶⁸

As the scene in the novel describing the arrival of the two men in a canoe suggests, Cree communities on the James Bay did not meet the expansion of the James Bay Project as victims without the resources to resist the forces of extractivism. They opposed the project through a well-organised and internationally publicised legal campaign and a political protest that included non-Indigenous participants in the early stages of the environmental justice movement in North America in the 1960s and 1970s.⁶⁹ In 1975, the signing of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement by Cree and Inuit representatives from Northern Quebec, the provincial government of Quebec, the national government of Canada, and the Hydro-Québec corporation, was celebrated as the first modern land claims settlement in Canada’s history.⁷⁰

Although the signing of the Agreement may have ended the assumption that the governments and corporation could completely disregard the concerns of the Cree and Inuit along the James Bay, the project continued into its second phase, as did the protest.⁷¹ In 2002, *La Paix des Braves* was signed by Québec’s Prime Minister Bernard Landry and Cree Grand Chief Ted Moses.⁷² While *La Paix des Braves* requires that the government and power company negotiate with the Cree as an independent nation, Cree communities continue to grieve the loss of their way of life. Many locals see the ‘new relationship’ as a renewal of forced assimilation as they continue to pay the heavy cultural and ecological costs of the slow ‘destruction and rearrangement of a vast landscape’.⁷³ In Hogan’s fictional version, in which the construction ends in 1972 after a year of protests, Angel mourns that ‘[i]t was too late for the Child River, for the caribou, the fish, even for our own children, but we had to believe, true or not, that our belated victory was the end of something’.⁷⁴ Her measured statement suggests that any small victory must be placed in the larger context of systemic oppression, and that the choice to believe in progress toward justice is only sustainable through the ‘we’ of community.

At the same time, at the end of the novel, Angel’s care for her young half-sister, whom she names Aurora, suggests that, as Dora-Rouge told her,

creation is ongoing; the novel's title *Solar Storms* suggests the strong connection Hogan intends her readers to see between Angel, Aurora, and the protest. Hogan's narration likewise speaks to the inherited Indigenous knowledge of ancestors that Simpson discusses, where what happens in the family unit is just as important as large-scale political mobilisation. Hogan's fictionalised version of extractivist projects such as James Bay exposes the illusion that addressing the environmental crises of our time is a matter of implementing top-down mitigation strategies, and that the Indigenous communities most directly impacted and their Western-trained allies are in the same boat on an endangered planet. The sense of urgency could be explored with the willingness, as Butler suggests, to 'tarry with grief' in the struggle for environmental justice. Hogan's narration underscores the need to take time to develop the collective responsibility to affirm the dignity of all human and non-human life. In *Dwellings*, she states,

The Western tradition of beliefs within a straight line of history leads to an apocalyptic ending. And stories of the end, like those of the beginning, tell something of the people who created them. [...] Indian people must not be the only ones who remember the agreement with the land.⁷⁵

Through Angel's story in *Solar Storms*, Hogan offers readers a chance to consider participating in the work of grief not as an interruption of, or a prelude to, the work of environmental justice, but as a social action of loving a world in the midst of extinction.⁷⁶

Notes

1. Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2004), p. 22.
2. Butler, p. 30.
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5. Adamson, p. 130.
6. Bud Ward, 'The high and low points for climate change in 2019', *Yale Climate Connections*, 11 December 2019. https://www.yaleclimateconnections.org/2019/12/the-high-and-low-points-for-climate-change-in-2019/?utm_source=News+from+Yale+Climate+Connections+%28Daily%29&utm_campaign=df2b05385a-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_12_12&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_31a3024b9b-df2b05385a-59314303. [Date accessed: 18 January 2021].
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8. See Harrison; Hellegers; Ellen Arnold, ‘Beginnings Are Everything: The Quest for Origins in Linda Hogan’s *Solar Storms*’, in *Things of the Spirit: Women Writers Constructing Spirituality*, ed. Kristina K. Groover (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press), pp. 284-303; Laura Virginia Castor, ‘Claiming Place in Wo(r)lds: Linda Hogan’s *Solar Storms*’, *MELUS*, 31.2 (2006), pp. 157-80; Jim Tarter, “‘Dreams of Earth’”: Place, Multiethnicity, and Environmental Justice in Linda Hogan’s *Solar Storms*’, in *Reading Under the Sign of Nature: New Essays in Ecocriticism*, ed. John Tallmadge (Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, 2000), pp. 128-47.
 9. See Stevenson; Tarter; Stacy Alaimo, ‘Skin Dreaming: The Bodily Transgressions of Fielding Burke, Octavia Butler, and Linda Hogan’, in *Ecofeminist Literary Criticism: Theory, Interpretation, Pedagogy*, ed. Greta Gaard and Patrick D. Murphy (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press), pp.123-38; Yonka Krasteva, ‘The Discourse of Madness and Environmental Justice in Linda Hogan’s *Solar Storms*’, *Semantic Scholar* (2013), <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/The-Discourse-of-Madness-and-Environmental-Justice-Krasteva/93b771766ac2d5a1cb2252ac9d94d8ad39c3dc18?p2df> [Date accessed: 18 January 2021].
 10. Catherine Kunce, ‘Feasting on Famine in Linda Hogan’s *Solar Storms*’, *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, 21.2 (2009), p. 50.
 11. Leeat Granek, ‘Grief’, in *Encyclopedia of Critical Psychology*, ed. Thomas Teo, 2014, https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007%2F978-1-4614-5583-7_127 [Date accessed 12 January 2021]; Maurice Stierl, ‘Contestations in death—the role of grief in migration struggles’, in *Citizenship Studies*, 22 January 2016, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/13621025.2015.1132571?casa_token=V1LC09IvucUAAAAA:iPahQcwh-iOQ_HsfxKg4_gpY7K2LcqJa_6cze1vwe_rF0br69pI1H_jRgDtbSmmX-tNzuQZL5U3Ciw [Date accessed: 18 January 2021].
 12. In ‘Claiming Place in Wo(r)lds: Linda Hogan’s *Solar Storms*’, p. 172, for example, I made this connection indirectly, interpreting Hogan’s meeting with her dying mother as a prerequisite to the narrator’s participation in the dam protest, rather than as a political act in itself.
 13. Whyte argues that when well-intentioned supporters of Indigenous environmental justice assume that any measure is preferable to no action, they inadvertently advocate greenwashing that paradoxically continues to colonize and harm Indigenous communities.
 14. ‘Survivance’ was used for centuries in French, as a legal term until the eighteenth century, and later as a French-Canadian term in the twentieth century that reflected the continuance of French-Canadian language and culture in the dominant English-speaking Canadian culture. Derrida uses the term to refer to the liminal border between living and dying when one is neither fully alive nor dead. See Vincent Leitch, *Literary Criticism in the 21st Century: Theory Renaissance* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), pp. 99-101.
 15. Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).

16. Gerald Vizenor, *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), p. 1.
17. Gerald Vizenor, *Native Liberty: Natural Reason and Cultural Survivance* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), p.1.
18. Patricia Clark Smith, *This Is About Vision: Interviews with Southwestern Writers* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1990), p. 154.
19. Paula Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1992), p. 54; Michael Anthony Hart, 'Indigenous Worldviews, Knowledge, and Research: The Development of an Indigenous Research Paradigm', *Journal of Indigenous Voices in Social Work*, 1.1 (2010), p. 8.
20. John Locke, 'Second Treatise on Government', *Project Gutenberg*, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/7370/7370-h/7370-h.htm> [Date accessed: 18 January 2021]; Seymour Martin Lipsitz, *American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword* (New York, NY: Norton, 1997 [1996]).
21. Resmaa Menakem, *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending our Hearts and Bodies* (Las Vegas, NV: Central Recovery Press, 2017); Richard Drinnon, *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire-Building*. (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997 [1980]).
22. It must also be noted that the grief particular groups experience in relation to extractivism may vary, depending on whether or not they perceive themselves as benefiting economically. For example, as LeMenager notes, many, but not all, poor whites and African Americans in the Gulf region where the BP Blowout occurred believe they need to take jobs in the oil industry, even though they are aware of the industrial contaminants in their backyards, the harm to their physical health, the likelihood of more accidents such as the BP Blowout, and the climate change impacts of the oil industry. For LeMenager, 'petro-melancholia' describes a condition that represents the inability of some artists and writers to imagine futures without massive species-extinction. Stephanie LeMenager, 'Petro-Melancholia: The BP Blowout and the Arts of Grief', *Qui Parle: Critical Humanities and Social Sciences*, 19.2 (2011), p. 29.
23. Butler, p. 28.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid, p. 30.
27. Ibid.
28. Butler also calls for the honouring of the sacredness of human and non-human life that is central to Indigenous epistemology. LeMenager distinguishes Butler's approach from Hannah Arendt's term 'the naked human', which, LeMenager argues, 'marks a modern dissociation from protective traditional statuses as well as the volatility of constitutional guarantees' (LeMenager, p. 29).
29. The Fat-Eaters, like the Inuit, inhabit the Canadian north and based their livelihood on caribou hunting and fishing (Castor, p. 176).
30. Linda Hogan, *Solar Storms* (New York, NY: Scribner, 1995), p. 21.
31. Ibid, p. 24.
32. Ibid, pp. 57-8.
33. Ibid, p. 170.
34. Ibid, p. 177.
35. Ibid, p. 205.

36. Ibid, p. 210.
37. Ibid, p. 211.
38. Ibid, p. 343.
39. Ibid, p. 246.
40. Ibid, p. 243.
41. Ibid, p. 247, 252.
42. Vizenor, *Native Liberty*, p.1.
43. Hogan, *Solar Storms*, p. 253.
44. Butler, p. 31.
45. Butler, p. 32.
46. Hogan, *Solar Storms*, p. 310.
47. Hogan, *Solar Storms*, p. 224.
48. Johnston discusses the multinational corporation as one contemporary embodiment of the wiindigoo. See Basil Johnston, *The Manitou: The Spiritual World of the Ojibway* (St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Press, 2001), pp. 235-37.
49. Hogan, *Solar Storms*, p. 280.
50. For Whyte, '[a]s Indigenous peoples, we do not tell our futures beginning from the position of concern with the Anthropocene as a hitherto unanticipated vision of human intervention, which involves mass extinctions and the disappearance of certain ecosystems. For the colonial period already rendered comparable outcomes that cost Indigenous peoples their reciprocal relationships with thousands of plants, animals, and ecosystems—most of which are not coming back' ('Indigenous Climate Change Studies', English Language Notes, 55.1-2 (2017), p. 159, <https://kylewhyte.marcom.cal.msu.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/12/2018/07/IndigenousClimateChangeStudies.pdf> [Date accessed: 18 January 2021]).
51. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, 'Indigenous Blockades Don't Just Decry Destruction—They Affirm Life', in *Yes!*, 24 February 2020, p. 16, <https://www.yesmagazine.org/opinion/2020/02/24/canada-pipeline-native-resistance-wetsuweten/> [Date accessed: 18 January 2021].
52. Ibid.
53. Hogan, *Solar Storms*, p. 177.
54. Ibid, p. 226.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid, p. 340.
57. Hogan, *Solar Storms*, p. 314. Many Hogan scholars have discussed the ways in which Hogan expresses Indigenous epistemologies, affirming the interconnected nature of reality while confronted by settler state injustices. For an overview of Hogan's novels and several critical responses to her work, see Castor, pp. 159-60. Recent Hogan scholarship has addressed the centrality of environmental justice issues to *Solar Storms*. Hellegers applies Hogan's practice of survivance to a Marxist-informed analysis of the relationship between the 'intergenerational traumas suffered by Native communities—and Native women' and 'the intergenerational life of capital and corporations that grow more powerful and expansive with every community they consume' (Hellegers, p. 2). Harrison addresses the ways in which Hogan's activism and imaginative writing are relevant for understanding the resistance to the neoliberal expansion that motivated the international protests at James Bay starting in the 1970s and the Dakota Access Pipeline at Standing Rock in the 2010s. For

- Harrison, both movements demonstrate how ‘any accurate understanding of an environmental crisis like climate change requires us to examine how it is linked to a long history of violence and trauma in Indigenous communities’ (Harrison, p. 2).
58. Stierl, p. 185.
 59. Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 2001), p. 13.
 60. Hogan, *Solar Storms*, p. 280.
 61. James B. Waldram, *As Long as the Rivers Run: Hydroelectric Development and Native Communities in Western Canada*, (Winnipeg, MB: University of Manitoba Press, 1993), p. 3, 8-9.
 62. In the 1940s, with the development of new hydropower technologies, the government began justifying incursions onto Native territory by arguing that water is a ‘common property resource’ of all Canadians and therefore takes legal precedence over the rights of the Cree to their unceded territory (Waldram, pp. 8-9). As of 2016, Hydro-Québec was the fourth-largest hydroelectric power producer in the world, providing ten percent of energy consumed by Canadians and New Englanders (Richard Valdmanis, ‘Quebec Key to Cutting New England Power Costs: Maine Governor’, in *Reuters*, 15 November 2013, <https://ca.reuters.com/article/domesticNews/idCAKCN0T21SR20151113>. [Date accessed: 18 January 2021]).
 63. According to Coon Come, the river diversions led to drowning of about ten thousand caribou and the loss of fourteen thousand square kilometres of territory (Matthew Coon Come, ‘A Reduction of Our World’, in Kurt Russo (ed), *Our People, Our Land: Perspectives on the Columbus Quincentenary* [Bellingham: Lummi Tribe and Kluckhohn Center, 1992], pp. 80–83; qtd. in Hellegers, p. 2). Widespread mercury contamination resulted when the sudden changes in water currents interrupted migration patterns. As many plants, fish, and mammals died, they produced decaying organic matter that released methane, leading to mercury poisoning of the surviving fish, and increased CO₂ emissions into the atmosphere. In turn, the salt water-fresh water balance shifted, shifting the Labrador to accelerate cooling of the continents on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean (Raymond Coppinger and Will Ryan, ‘James Bay: Environmental Considerations for Building Large Hydroelectric Dams and Reservoirs’, in James F. Hornig (ed), *Social and Environmental Impacts of the James Bay Hydroelectric Project* [Montreal, QC: McGill-Queens University Press, 1999], pp. 42–43).
 64. Winona LaDuke, *All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1999), p. 62.
 65. Hogan, *Solar Storms*, p. 225.
 66. Nixon, p. 4.
 67. Hogan, *Solar Storms*, p. 226.
 68. Butler, p. 30.
 69. ‘Environmental Justice Timeline’, *United States Environmental Protection Agency*. 2 June 2017, <https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/environmental-justice-timeline> [Date accessed: 18 January 2021].
 70. LaDuke, pp. 61-63.
 71. ‘James Bay Road—Hydro Québec Project’, <http://jamesbayroad.com/hydro/index.html> [Date accessed: 18 January 2021].

72. Francis Boucher, 'Ce que cache la Paix des Braves', *Alternatives*, 9.9, 23 May 2003, <https://journal.alternatives.ca/Ce-que-cache-la-Paix-des-Braves> [Date accessed: 18 January 2021].
73. Coon Come, p. 82, qtd. in Hellegers.
74. Hogan, *Solar Storms*, p. 344.
75. Linda Hogan, *Dwellings: A Spiritual History of the Living World* (New York, NY: Touchstone, 1995), p. 93, 94.
76. LeMenager names 'loving in the midst of extinction' as a reason for reading cli-fi (Stephanie LeMenager, 'What is Cli-Fi?' Radcliff Institute. 25 January 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P9XuxHtfOxQ> [Date accessed: 7 March 2020]).

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).