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Original Article

Ecological Displacement and the Loss of Home: Solastalgia and Ecological Grief in Linda Hogan's *Solar Storms*

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to explore whether or not Linda Hogan's Solar Storms (1995) represents environmental destruction not only as physical damage to land and water but as a profound disruption of the lived experience of place of the Indigenous communities on an emotional, cultural, spiritual basis. Ecocriticism is used as a theoretical framework for this paper, whereas solastalgia and ecological grief provide its basic conceptual frameworks. The research method used in this study is textual analysis, with the help of which it is investigated how environmental transformation, particularly the construction of a hydroelectric dam, produces distress over the alteration of homeland and grief over the destruction of the familiar homely landscape. The study explores how solastalgia and ecological grief identify different dimensions of environmental loss and distress within an altered landscape and the resultant mourning for ecological loss, and how their intersection in Solar Storms produces a sense of ecological displacement. The term ecological displacement here is not used as an additional theoretical framework; rather, it helps synthesise an analytical concept for understanding how environmental destruction disrupts place, belonging, memory, cultural continuity, spirituality, and human–more-than-human relationships simultaneously. The analysis shows how the destruction of land and water is connected with the destruction of animals and plants and how it impacts community practices and Indigenous ways of knowing and living. Hogan portrayal of grief is not just as passive suffering but as an active source of recognition, solidarity, reclamation, and resistance. The paper concludes with the argument that Solar Storms transforms environmental loss into a complex narrative of ecological displacement in which resistance and mourning are inter mingled reactions to the disruption of home and place.

Keywords: Solar Storms, ecocriticism, solastalgia, ecological grief, ecological displacement, environmental loss

1. Introduction

Amidst all the material progress, environmental destruction and devastation are constantly on the rise, posing a serious threat to natural ecosystems and all the living creatures, be they humans or other species. The swift material changes we see in the world we live in are not mythical but a matter of fact, and they are closely linked to the lived experiences of human beings. Modifications in the familiar landscape result in the alteration of memory, belongingness, and cultural continuity. Such alterations are the result of changes in land, water bodies, animals, and landscapes. And they all affect our understanding of our home. Ecocriticism, according to Glotfelty (1996), is a branch of knowledge that deals with the relationship between literary texts and the physical environment. Glotfelty and Fromm in *The Ecocriticism Reader (1996)* consolidated the relationship between literature and the physical world. This reader provided a strong foundation for the study of literary ecology as a distinct field of study.

Linda Hogan (1995), in her novel *Solar Storms*, depicts Angel's journey back to her native land as a reflection of family history and cultural memory, as well as environmental destruction and political resistance. Angel faces a great challenge in the search for her personal identity as she opposes the construction of the hydroelectric dam that did not seem to her sustainable for the land, water, and animals native to America, and it also threatened Indigenous people's way of living. The environmental crisis portrayed by Hogan in her fictional discourse cannot be separated from human memory, identity, home, and belonging, which haunt Angel.

Solar Storms has been analysed by different scholars from various perspectives, such as Jespersen (2010) who proposes it as a text that reframes the adventure narrative through the lens of Indigenous ecology, gender, and resistance. While to Smith and Holland (2016), analysed Hogan's work on water and resource management. Castor (2021) highlighted the significance of grief in representing Indigenous people as part of environmental justice and Indigenous survivability, suggesting that Angel 'report is not a representation of her a personal loss but it stands for collective resistance in polity through its political community.

The objective of this research is to explore Solar *Storms* from yet another perspective. Its conceptual framework is based on solastalgia and ecological grief. Solastalgia was the term coined by Albrecht et al. (2007). It is defined as "a distress caused by environmental changes even when people are still connected to the affected home or environment" (Albrecht et al., 2007). Cunsolo and Ellis (2018) mentioned ecological grief, a type of grief that arises from the loss of endangered species, ecosystems, and landscapes.

Though the concepts seem overlapping, they both centre around distinct aspects of ecological loss. Solastalgia highlights the agony of residing in a changed atmosphere, whereas ecological grief accentuates lament over the loss or potential disappearance of a familiar world. The novels selected for this study are on the basis of their close correlation with solastalgia, eco grief and a deep sense of ecological displacement. Damage to the land is not only damage to human abodes but to the entire world around them. It also impacts animals, plants, waterways, memories and cultural practices, leading to convergence of grief related to ecological loss and distress.

Accordingly, this article suggests ecological displacement as a synthesising interpretive concept. Solastalgia and ecological grief are not regarded as alternatives to ecological displacement. Rather, they form a combination of two ideas that illustrate how environmental devastation leads to the displacement of individuals and communities from ecological relationships that provide them with a sense of home, identity, belongingness, memory, and cultural continuity.

1. 1. Research Objectives

The study has the following research objectives:

1. To examine how *Solar Storms* represents environmental transformation and ecological loss through an ecocritical perspective.
2. To analyse how solastalgia and ecological grief are represented through the transformation of Indigenous land and water and through the destruction of the more-than-human world.
3. To investigate how the convergence of solastalgia and ecological grief produces ecological displacement, particularly in

relation to home, memory, belonging, cultural continuity, and resistance.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Ecocriticism and Human–Environment Relationships

The overarching theoretical framework used for this study is Ecocriticism, a branch of knowledge that examines the relationship between literature and the physical environment (Glotfelty,1996). Glotfelty and Fromm's *The Ecocriticism Reader* provided a solid foundation for literary approaches that deal with the investigation of how literary texts represent, question, and reshape relationships between human beings and the natural world.

Ecocriticism provides a useful conceptual framework for the study of Solar *Storms* for its capacity to move environmental analysis beyond the treatment of nature as background scenery. For Hogan, landscapes are active parts of her narrative that are intimately connected with human identity, memory, culture, and spirituality. For the protagonist, Angel, land and water are not mere locations around which she lives, but they provide the background in which she experiences life; their transformation changes her life and the lives of the characters and the communities to which she belongs.

So, the environmental crisis presented in the novel is, therefore, also a crisis of relationships. The novel presents contrasts between Indigenous relational understandings of the natural world with extractive approaches that treat land and water as resources available for economic development. This distinction is particularly significant in the context of the hydroelectric project at the centre of the novel.

2.2 Solastalgia

Solastalgia, the term coined by Albrecht et al. (2007), one of the main conceptual frameworks for this study, deals with environmentally induced distress experienced by people who remain connected to a place undergoing damaging transformation. It is different from nostalgia, that involves longing for a place from which one is physically separated, solastalgia concerns the distress of witnessing one's own home and environment get changed while still being attached to it.

The distinction between nostalgia and solastalgia is particularly relevant to *Solar Storms*, as the distress of its characters is more than homesickness. Their very relationship with their home is threatened due to the rapid changes in the physical environment which have transformed the whole familiar landscape altogether. The place remains there along with them, but the changes in infrastructures have changed its material and cultural character causing deep lament for what it used to be.

The source material, for this study has operationalized solastalgia through six different indicators: i) environmental transformation, ii) loss of place, iii) distress, iv) threatened identity, v) disrupted belonging, and vi) diminished agency. They are vital for examining the characters' reactions responses to the environmental changes represented in the novel.

2.3 Ecological Grief

Cunsolo and Ellis (2018) identify ecological grief as grief associated with ecological losses, including the loss of valued species, ecosystems, and landscapes. Ecological grief is the second conceptual framework used for this paper which is different from a general sense of environmental concern. It involves mourning for actual, anticipated, or experienced ecological loss.

The concept of ecological grief is also suitable for the study of Solar *Storms,* as Hogan repeatedly depicts the destruction of landscape and the disappearance of animals, plants, waterways, and habitats, making it all look alien and unfamiliar. Through her powerful depiction, Hogan makes ecological loss emotionally perceptible in a world that is more-than-human.

The original text of the novel has been operationalized in terms of ecological grief through ecological loss, mourning, anticipatory loss, naming, archiving, and rhetorical representation. These indicators allow the researcher to analyse the text not merely to see whether environmental destruction occurs or not but how the narrative makes ecological loss visible and emotionally meaningful.

2.4 From Solastalgia and Ecological Grief to Ecological Displacement

Solastalgia and ecological grief are both apparently related but analytically distinguishable concepts. Solastalgia is concerned with the experience of environmental transformation as distress within an altered home, whereas ecological grief concerns mourning for ecological loss. In *Solar Storms*, however, the two processes repeatedly converge.

Distress is the result of the destruction of land which makes homeland unfamiliar. While at the same time, the disappearance of animals and destruction of their habitats inculcates a sense of grief because of the diminishing of the more-than-human community. All these changes create a sense of displacement that is more than physical relocation. Even if the people may remain geographically connected to their homeland they get increasingly separated from the ecological, cultural, spiritual, and relational conditions that were the defining features to make their place, their home.

The concept of ecological displacement is, therefore, used in this paper as an interpretive synthesis: as the environmental transformation leads to solastalgia which is added by ecological grief which results is the feeling of ecological displacement including disruption of home, memory, identity, belonging, and relationality.

3. Methodology

This is a qualitative interpretive study using textual analysis and close reading as research tools and ecocriticism as theoretical framework while solastalgia and ecological grief constitute the primary conceptual frameworks. The primary text is Linda Hogan's *Solar Storms* (1995). The study it examines how the novel constructs and represents experiences of environmental loss through narrative voice, characterization, imagery, symbolism, description, memory, and representations of human–environment relationships.

The textual analysis focuses on passages involving transformation or destruction of land and water; displacement and altered landscapes; loss or destruction of animals and plants; environmental contamination; memories of ecological abundance; emotional responses to damaged environments; spiritual relationships with nature; disrupted belonging and cultural continuity and resistance to environmental destruction.

The analysis first identifies representations of environmental change through an ecocritical reading. It then examines the emotional and cultural consequences of that change through solastalgia and ecological grief. Finally, where these two experiences converge, the analysis uses **ecological displacement** as a synthesising interpretive category.

This approach preserves the established methodology and ensures that the argument remains grounded in the textual evidence of *Solar Storms*.

4.1 Analysis and Discussion

Environmental Transformation and the Loss of Home

The construction of the hydroelectric dam is one of the most significant environmental conflicts in *Solar Storms*. The project on the hand is the representation of material progress and development in the area but on the other hand it has transformed the physical landscape of the area. This drastic change has disrupted the social and cultural relationships that Indigenous communities have been enjoying with the familiar landscape.

The novel indicates that the dam construction is central to the representation of environmental destruction and it also shows that the Indigenous communities have no power to prevent the transformation of their land. The consequences of this environmental change go beyond physical alteration. The modifications of the familiar landscape and the changes in the water reservoirs and channels change the whole world of the community that they used to take as there home. As Angel observes, "The mudflats were vast. They were what had been lake before the diversion of a great east-flowing river to the west of them" (Hogan, 1995, p. 167). This discourse indicates the contrast between now and then...what the landscape is and what it used to be. The phrase "what had been lake" regretfully indicates ecological transformation which for the natives is a form of historical loss. The present landscape evokes the memory of an earlier familiar ecological condition.

This is a distinctly solastalgic structure. Here the distress does not arise because the characters have simply left their homeland but because the homeland itself has been transformed into an unfamiliar land. Geographically the place is there but materially it has become unfamiliar.

This transformation of the familiar place inculcates a deep sense of **displacement without complete physical departure**. The people are still attached to the land, but the changes in their familiar land have adversely impacted the basis of that attachment. Here solastalgia gives way to ecological displacement.

Land, Water, and Indigenous Relationality

The environmental vision of the novel is based on a relational understanding of the natural world. Land and water are represented not as non-living entities but as living components of an interconnected world. This understanding is articulated in the novel through the statement, "The people at Adam's Rib believed everything was alive, that we were surrounded by the faces and loving of gods" (Hogan, 1995, p. 62).

This important statement establishes an ontological difference between a relational Indigenous understanding of nature and an extractive approach to the environment. Hogan shows that the landscape is not external to human existence rather it is a part of their living experience. It is a part of their cultural, emotional, and spiritual life.

Water holds a special significance in Hogan's novel. Many researchers have highlighted it their researches for Smith and Holland (2016) show that Hogan repeatedly links Indigenous relationships with water. In this way she questions of resource management and cultural relations.

The damage to land and water does not only refers to environmental degradation. But the environment is taken as relational, so ecological destruction leads to cultural and emotional destruction as well. Solastalgia emerges because the place of belonging is changed; ecological grief is experienced by the members of the affected community. Their convergence leads ecological displacement: and this disruption of ecological relationships becomes a disruption of the conditions through which home is experienced.

4.2 Animals, Biodiversity, and Ecological Grief

One of the clearest pieces of evidence of ecological grief is portrayed by Hogan in her representation of animals and their disappearance. The novel highlights the cruel destruction of wolves and foxes by settlers, "the remaining stray wolves and fox were poisoned to make more room for the European settlers and the pigs and cattle they'd brought with them" (Hogan, 1995, pp. 17–18).

This part of Hogan's fictional discourse goes far beyond the death of individual animals. Rather the disappearance of wolves and foxes alters the ecological character of the place. The animals are a part of that world, members of that interconnected environment, and their extermination indicates the disruption of ecological balance and the resultant loss and grief. This passage highlights how Hogan represents of the destruction of Indigenous ecology and records Angel's emotional response to the remnants of the dead animals.

Through Angel, Hogan expresses ecological grief because the narrative does not merely record ecological destruction as historical information but its impacts on the humans closely associated with that land which makes the loss emotionally meaningful.

The animals, therefore, are a part of the memory archives of the human characters presented by Hogan. Their disappearance remains embedded in place names, stories, landscapes, and Angel's perception of the environment. Ecological grief is thus connected to memory and to remember the environment is like remembering what used to be there and what has been destroyed.

4.3 The Ethics of Human–Animal Relationships

Hogan develops this sense of ecological grief by highlighting the contrast between different attitudes toward animals. Angel is saddened by the way wolves were killed then during the fishing episode, Angel becomes sad by the cruel treatment of fish. Bush, another character in the novel, emphasizes that animals and fish must be approached properly: "There are proper ways to approach animals and fish," Bush said. "Just as there are proper ways to approach a woman" (Hogan, 1995, p. 65).

This comparison establishes an ethical principle based on respect rather than domination. The fish are not represented as objects without significance; their suffering also matters. The narrative consequently challenges a worldview in which the more-than-human world exists primarily for human use. The novel identifies this contrast between exploitative treatment and Indigenous relationality as central to Hogan's stance.

This distinction is important for ecological grief because mourning is only possible where ecological entities are owned carry emotional value and relational significance. The destruction of animals is, therefore, the destruction of relationships.

Ecological grief in *Solar Storms* is not merely grief for "nature" in an abstract sense; rather, it is grief for particular beings and relationships that constitute a lived ecological community.

4.4 Bridges, Roads, and the Material Production of Displacement

Hogan's treatment of infrastructure provides yet another important link between solastalgia and ecological displacement.

Angel talks about the consequences of construction, "Animals in the path of it were killed, people's lives displaced, plants and lives gone forever to make way" (Hogan, 1995, pp. 80–81). This utterance is significant as it brackets animals**, people, plants, and lives** within the same ambit of destruction. Here living creatures' displacement and ecological loss are not separate events but one and the same thing.

The building of new infrastructure leads to multiple forms of displacement simultaneously. People are physically and culturally displaced; animals lose habitats; plants disappear; and previously existing ecological relationships are interrupted.

This is precisely where the concept of ecological displacement becomes analytically productive. Solastalgia explains the distress caused by the transformation of familiar environments. Ecological grief explains the mourning associated with the disappearance of animals and plants. Ecological displacement brings the two dimensions together by emphasizing that environmental transformation dislocates entire networks of relationship.

4.5 The Dam as the Culmination of Ecological Displacement

The hydroelectric dam represents the culmination of the environmental transformations that occur throughout the novel. Earlier instances of poisoning animals, their habitat destruction, construction of new infrastructure, and the resultant ecological disruption lead the narrative for the biggest transformation produced by the dam.

The novel material records that the construction of the dam eventually "changed everything," even when the community organizes resistance against its construction. The word "everything" is very significant as the dam is not merely an engineering structure. It brings a complete transformation in the physical environment, community relationships, cultural practices, and peoples' emotional relationship with place.

The alienation of the familiar world produces solastalgia. It inculcates a deep sense of grief--- ecological grief because this transformation threatens animals, plants, waterways, and habitats. It also leads to ecological displacement as the relationship of the community with its homeland gets increasingly disrupted.

Thus, symbolically the dam functions as a mechanism of multidimensional displacement.

4.6 Spiritual Displacement and the Loss of Belonging

There is a spiritual dimension of environmental crisis in *Solar Storms* if land is taken living and relational, then its destruction inevitably affects spiritual belonging.

The statement that "It was murder of the soul that was taking place there" (Hogan, 1995, p. 181) captures the soul of this perception. Environmental destruction is depicted not only in terms of physical damage but as an assault upon the spiritual conditions of communal life.

This goes with the concept of ecological displacement, one of the main conceptual frameworks of the study. When we talk about physical displacement it is usually taken as a movement from one location to another. But ecological displacement, however, occurs when people get alienated from the place while remain connected to a place whose ecological and cultural conditions have been fundamentally altered.

This alienation within one's own homeland is the most devastating feeling and it is explicitly identified in the text--- this relationship between environmental destruction, alienation, and Indigenous attachment to home leads to ecological grief.

Solastalgia indicates the emotional distress of this condition. Ecological grief indicates mourning for the ecological losses that produce it. Together, they highlight a deep disruption of belonging.

4.7 Memory, Trauma, and Ecological Displacement

Angel's personal life history highlights another dimension of displacement. When she returns to her ancestral environment, she carries the psychological consequences of separation, fragmented family relationships, and an uncertain sense of belonging. She recalls, "All I had was a life on paper stored in file cabinets, a series of foster homes" (Hogan, 1995, p. 21).

Her personal displacement does not simply duplicate ecological displacement, but the narrative places the two forms of fractured belonging side by side. Angel who has been separated from family, place, and cultural continuity, but it is even more tragic for her to find that the landscape to which she returns has itself been damaged.

The relationship between personal and ecological displacement becomes particularly important because Hogan does not isolate individual trauma from environmental history. The damaged landscape assumes the shape of a repository of collective memory, while Angel's recovery of her family history enables her to understand her relationship to place. The transformation of the place inculcates a deep sense of loss.

Ecological displacement, for Hogan is material and mnemonic at the same time. When the familiar landscapes disappear, memories attached to them are also placed at risk.

4.8 From Grief to Resistance

One of the major strengths of *Solar Storms* is that the environmental grief in it does not remain passive. Hogan's fictional characters' recognition of ecological loss contributes to their political resistance.

Jespersen (2010) takes the womens' journey as a form of Indigenous activism connected with ecology, gender, and resistance. Castor (2021), similarly, holds that grief in *Solar Storms* can become part of Indigenous survivance and environmental justice.

This study builds on, on this insight by connecting resistance to the convergence of solastalgia and ecological grief. The characters offer resistance because the alteration of their familiar environment is experienced as a threat to home and ecological loss is experienced as mourning.

Grief, therefore, becomes politically productive. It identifies what is significant and matters and what is worth defending.

This is of particular significance as it prevents the concept of ecological displacement from merely becoming a vocabulary of victimhood. In Hogan's discourse, displacement generates recognition, and recognition can generate resistance.

4.9 Ecological Displacement as the Synthesis of Solastalgia and Ecological Grief

Until now what we have gathered through the analysis is that solastalgia and ecological grief should not be treated as entirely different emotional categories in *Solar Storms*. The narrative repeatedly brings them together, though analytically they are distinguishable.

Solastalgia emerges when familiar landscapes are transformed; when home becomes unfamiliar; when belonging is

threatened; when cultural identity is destabilized and when communities experience diminished agency.

Ecological grief emerges when animals are killed; species disappear; habitats are destroyed; water becomes contaminated; landscapes are permanently altered and ecological futures become uncertain.

Yet all these processes intersect because the loss of all the familiar things changes the meaning of home. Conversely, the transformation of home is experienced partly through witnessing the disappearance of the more-than-human world.

Ecological displacement, therefore, names the **condition produced by their convergence**. It encompasses **environmental displacement** in the form of transformation of land and water; **emotional displacement** as the resultant distress and grief; **cultural displacement** as the disruption of practices and inherited relationships; **spiritual displacement** as the disruption of relationships with a living environment; **relational displacement** as the loss of connections between humans and the more-than-human world; **mnemonic displacement** as threatened continuity of ecological and cultural memory.

The concept of ecological grief, therefore, allows the study to retain the original conceptual framework while making a more integrated argument about the novel.

5.1 Conclusion

Linda Hogan's *Solar Storms* represents environmental destruction as a multidimensional crisis in which ecological transformation becomes inseparable from emotional, cultural, spiritual, and relational loss. Through its representation of dam construction, altered waterways, destroyed habitats, disappearing animals, damaged landscapes, and disrupted Indigenous relationships with land and water, the novel challenges an understanding of environmental destruction as merely physical or material.

This paper has explored *Solar Storms* by Hogan to see whether it can be taken as a representation of solastalgia and ecological grief or not. The overarching theoretical framework used for it is ecocriticism whereas **solastalgia and ecological grief are used as the primary conceptual frameworks**. The analysis shows that the concept of solastalgia is particularly instrumental in understanding the distress caused by the alteration and transformation of the homeland, while ecological grief highlights the resultant mourning by the killing of animals and destruction of their habitats, destruction of plants, imbalance of ecosystems, and wreck of landscapes. Both these concepts reveal significant but distinct dimensions of the environmental crisis represented in the selected text.

5.2 Ecological displacement emerged as the main argument of the study which bring this fact to light that though solastalgia and ecological grief are two different aspects of ecological grief but they cannot be ultimately separated. In *Solar Storms*, the transformation of homeland, depicted in Solar Storms inculcates a sense of despair and grief for the more-than-human world, while ecological loss changes the meaning of home of yesteryear. So, the convergence of both creates a larger condition of **ecological displacement**. This displacement is not the manifestation of physical removal from the familiar world alone. It encompasses the disruption of those very relationships through which the individuals and the communities used to experience that place as home. This displacement is from the memory of their shared histories, which was a source of the sustenance of their cultural identity, which was a means of maintaining their spiritual and ethical relationships with the more-than-human world.

Ecological displacement, therefore, is a **synthesising interpretive concept rather than another theoretical framework**. It brings both conceptual frameworks of solastalgia and ecological grief into a single analytical trajectory: environmental destruction alters home; transformation of home inculcates distress; ecological destruction and imbalance lead to a deep sense of loss that produces mourning; and then the convergence of distress and mourning disrupts a sense of belonging and relational continuity which used to be a defining feature of their lives related to their land.

Hogan does not represent ecological grief solely as an experience of helplessness, but this grief is transformed into a recognition that leads to resistance. So, the mourning is converted into struggle against the dam. Hogan highlights how mourning can become politically and culturally meaningful. So, the findings of this study complement the existing scholarship that identifies grief, environmental injustice, Indigenous water relations, and resistance as central to *Solar Storms*.

Finally, *Solar Storms* stressed the point that environmental destruction not mere destruction of a piece of land or a place but it is also destruction of relationships. The loss of land is the loss of shared memories; the transformation of water is the transformation of cultural continuity; the death of animals and the destruction of their habitats is an ecological and emotional loss; and the alteration of homeland gives birth to alienation even when people remain physically connected to the place. Through the combined lenses of solastalgia and ecological grief, the novel can, therefore, be taken as a powerful narrative of **ecological displacement**, while its representation of collective resistance demonstrates the possibility of reclaiming relationships with place.

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Credit authorship contribution statement

Ghulam Abbas: Writing –review & editing, Writing – original draft, Methodology, Formal analysis, Conceptualization. **Prof. Dr. Asma Zahoor** : Writing –review & editing, Supervision, Conceptualization.

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