



## The Land's Last Cry: Healing Ecological and Cultural Wounds in *Mean Spirit*''

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### 1.1 Abstract

Linda Hogan's *Mean Spirit* is a sensitive eco-Indigenous book that reveals the destruction of the environment, ecological wisdom, Indigenous cultures and the strength of Native spiritual. Set in the early 1900s during the Osage oil boom is also known as the Reign of Terror. The story shows how settler colonial greed destroys both the soil that supports it and the people who live there. Indeed, Hogan uses literature to bring back to life a forceful and often ignored past where she places land at the centre of Indigenous identity. The paper shows that colonial exploitation harms the Indigenous people as well it damages the Earth. Moreover, Hogan stories are ecological restoration, which happen with cultural survival, political justice and the renewal of Indigenous bonds with place. Further, the paper analyses cultural traumas, collective memory, integration of ecological, healing routes of land, Indigenous perspectives and spiritual fortitude. Besides, it claims that *Mean Spirit* transcends a mere story of pain, emerging as a literary act of healing and reclaiming of land's memory and Indigenous cultural. In addition, the sovereignty through the lenses of eco-Indigenous critique, postcolonial theory and environmental justice frameworks are revealed.

**Keywords:** Ecology, Culture, Resilience, Healing

### 1.2 Introduction

People from all around the world want to live in nature that is not ruined. But since people consume too many natural resources, there is now an ecological imbalance. Environmentalists say that people are the main cause of ecological imbalance, ecosystem damage and land degradation. This is a big problem for both people and animals and the dangerous state of the environment has also been the main cause of pain and suffering. Additionally, the loss of habitat has led to lower groundwater levels, less fertile land, health problems, natural disasters and the extinction of animals. Certainly, the main problems are global warming, the greenhouse effect and pollution of natural resources. Thus, it is necessary to use different types of literature to help people realise that surviving on this planet means living in peace with all other species and the natural resources that are accessible. The planet becomes a live representation of suffering, unfairness, and strength. *Mean Spirit* reveals that colonial exploitation damages the Earth as a whole, not just the people who live there. In general, Linda Hogan interweaves cultural genocide, environmental degradation and the resilience of Indigenous ecological and spiritual knowledge. Likewise, the select novel takes place in the early 1900s, during the Osage oil boom, which was known as the Reign of Terror. Equally important, it portrays how the greed of the colonists kills both the people and the land that nourishes them. As a Chickasaw novelist, Hogan employs a literary point of view that focusses on Indigenous identity and land to bring back a violent and mainly hidden history. Subsequently, Hogan resists through profoundly symbolic narratives that cultural preservation, political equity, and the rejuvenation of Indigenous connections to land are essential for ecological restoration.

Linda Hogan's capacity to interlink ecological and cultural wounds, articulate the land's lament, and conceptualise pathways to healing grounded on Indigenous perspectives, collective memory, and spiritual resilience. Taken together, Mean Spirit changes from a novel about pain to a literary act of healing that reclaims Indigenous cultural sovereignty and the memory of the land. Broadly speaking, it does this via eco-Indigenous criticism, postcolonial theory, and environmental justice frameworks. To properly comprehend the depth of Hogan's ecological vision, one must first recognise that the Osage environment is a fully alive entity in the novel, not merely a backdrop. Hogan reveals: The earth remembers everything... the footsteps, the blood, even the sorrow that sinks down into it." (47) Significantly, Hogan depicts the planet as alive, intelligent, and emotionally responding, consistent with most Indigenous cosmologies. The earth has the bodies of those who were killed by colonial violence, hears the cries of the living, and recalls the footsteps of predecessors. This type of language is not just a metaphor; it describes a true situation in which land, non-human life, and human life are all connected by commitments to each other. It can be seen that Hogan says that ecological trauma is exactly as real as human trauma since land is a living thing.

The story shows how the ecosystem takes in the violence done to it by showing drilling, burning, poisoning, and deterioration again and over again. It is important that Hogan calls the oil that seeps beneath the surface dark blood, which is a metaphor for a wound. Even while oil production makes the Osage Nation prosperous, it is seen as a violent breach that destroys the natural balance and cultural harmony instead than a symbol of success. Specifically, the earth cries because it is hurt and because the network of relationships that holds its people together is being torn apart. In this way, the land's cry is both literal and symbolic.

The major concern according to Linda Hogan is that how crucial oil is as a symbol. Here, oil is an example of how sacred land has been turned into something beneficial. Similarly, oil is a symbol of wealth, opportunity and power for colonisers. The Osage have lost their sovereignty, had family members killed, their animals poisoned and their water tainted

as a result of their acceptance. By drawing a comparison between acts of violence against the Osage people and acts of violence against the Earth, Hogan creates a strong link between environmental degradation and human misery. "What a strange alchemy we have worked, turning earth around to destroy itself, using earth's own elements to wound it." (72) When settlers do this, they often physically and symbolically interfere with Indigenous people's daily life. In the same way, their relationships suffer when they contaminate the environment. Another essential point is that they undermine the stability of civilisations by destroying crops. Ecological and cultural trauma are intimately linked with this kind of violence. Hogan wants colonial exploitation to be seen as a kind of gradual violence. Rob Nixon then used this concept to make an argument about damage that occurs gradually, accumulates over time, and is sometimes difficult to see under colonial systems and capitalism. The ecosystem is harmed by pollution, drilling and over-extraction in ways that people are unaware of until they get ill, die or cause cultural instability.

*Mean Spirit* articulates that the Osage were killed on determination and not by natural tragedies. for instance, throughout the Reign of Terror, many Osage people were killed on purpose so that white caretakers and other businesspersons looking for effort to get their oil head rights. Linda Hogan does not think of these murders as separate crimes; she thinks of them as part of a bigger colonial system that aims to take away Indigenous people's land, wealth and independence. The government stepped in and used legal methods to enact laws that made white people responsible for the Osage's way of life and supplies. Therefore, characters demonstrate their position in the natural life system when they discuss injustice, narrate tales, or perform rituals. Basically, Indigenous literature emphasises that reestablishing the ecosystem needs more contribution than just saving resources and planting trees. Further, the analysis confirms that land rights, political freedom and cultural power all to be restored. The plot claims that healing must be fair. Additionally, the argument suggests that the damage brought about by colonial exploitation starts to restore as Indigenous people retrieve sovereignty over their land and cultural practices.

Linda Hogan writes about violence, but she does not make the Osage people look like normal victims. Instead, she gives strong examples of Indigenous ecological restoration, survivance and resilience. *Mean Spirit*'s healing shows itself in acts of remembering, rituals, community support, and the restoration of knowledge based on the land. The healing approach is based on the idea that indigenous people have spiritual and ecological ties to the land. It is important to note that people like Belle Graycloud, Nola Blankenship and others believe that land should be handled with reciprocity, respect and responsibility. This study highlights that these women maintain the cultural continuity that is essential for ecological healing by doing things like burying the deceased with ceremony, doing rituals, respecting holy locations and passing on knowledge to future generations. Ecofeminist theory posits that the exploitation of the environment and the subjection of women are interconnected under patriarchal and colonial systems. Thereby, this aligns well with Hogan's portrayal of Indigenous women as spiritual and ecological mediators. Therefore, Hogan proposes that as long as these women a voice is connected to restoring Indigenous women's power and mending the land and culture.

Linda Hogan's technique of telling stories is a type of atonement because it brings back memories and stories that colonial archives have sought to erase. The land in *Mean Spirit* is like a library that holds the stories of everyone who has lived, killed, and battled there. This is what makes memory eco-friendly. Restoring memory is a method to restore ecological balance, since it re-establishes the Indigenous perspective on the world, which is vital for sustainable existence. Hogan believes that forgetting is a kind of colonial brutality because it makes Indigenous people lose their sense of who they are when they have to give up their history, languages, spiritual duties, or links to the land. But remembering is a brave way to take back control. When characters speak about unfairness, tell stories, or do rituals, they show their place in the natural life system. According to Linda Hogan, improving things also requires political will.

Indigenous literature highlights that planting trees and conserving resources are not enough to restore the ecosystem. Subsequently, it must also return cultural power, political freedom and land rights. According to *Mean Spirit*, mending has to be equitable. "There is a way that nature speaks, that land speaks. Most of the time we are simply not patient enough, quiet enough, to pay attention to the story." (12) When Indigenous people regain sovereignty over their land, political systems, and customs, the harm caused by colonial exploitation begins to heal. Hogan's final performance was heart-breaking because of all the fatalities, but it also offers promise for a new beginning.

The Osage culture is making an effort to reconstruct, regain its independence, and rediscover its environmental obligations. The Earth is still alive despite its scars. Life, memory and the spirit continue to gain from it. This strongly suggests that Linda Hogan contends that because of the tremendous suffering that has taken place, healing cannot be equated with a return to an idealised, unaltered past. Healing is really a process of renewal, at the same time, it includes restoring traditional values, healing damaged relationships, and relocating land within Indigenous destiny. Thus, this holistic method to healing is grounded on indigenous ecocriticism, which grasps that people, non-humans and the environment are all part of the same community. Instead of being a single process, healing is a communal and cooperative one.

In fact, Linda Hogan's perspective upholds that land and culture are closely linked, in contrast to Western environmentalism, which often understands nature as apart from human experience. Altogether, land is a living being that wishes to be cared for, not something that has to be controlled at large. The extractive capitalism that the settlers in the book support is far different from this form of relationship-based ethics. Here, Hogan takes use of this distinction to change people's perspectives on environmental issues. She goes on to say that colonial notions that see land as a commodity rather than a family member are exacerbating the situation.

The main idea of *Mean Spirit* is how both people and land can bounce back from catastrophe. The land's last cry is not just a sign of ecological sorrow, but it is also a plea for justice, remembering, and mending of connections. Hogan believes that healing involves paying special attention to the soil, ancestors, local stories, and the spiritual forces that nourish life. Hogan gives the planet a voice to confront the colonial silence that has long erased Indigenous ecological knowledge. For the land to heal, culture must heal, and vice versa. *Mean Spirit* becomes a literary ritual of healing via a complicated tale of colonial violence and Indigenous strength. It asks readers to accept that ecological wounds are also cultural wounds and that both need to be healed for there to be any meaningful healing.

Nola Blanket is a strong character in *Mean Spirit*. She gets her power from the earth's unyielding tenacity, not by being violent. Unlike others who are lured by unexpected wealth and oil, she strongly believes that the earth has tales, wounds, and the voices of ancestors. She does not like to fight, yet her quiet shows strength. *The land remembers what we do to it, and in remembering, it bears witness to the violence we inflict—not only upon it, but upon ourselves and our communities.*" (42) In addition, Nola believes that the earth remembers things longer than any person does. She also takes care of the soil as a person takes care of a wound, understanding that the earth underneath them is where the community needs to start to heal.

Linda Hogan's work often includes Nola Blanket, who appears to come from the plains and winds of Oklahoma. In particular, she utilised Nola to show how Indigenous communities had matrilineal control, as women are in charge of the land and spirits. Nola sees how greed takes away people's history and turns a place of worship (land) into a war zone. In this tumultuous world created by colonisation and oil money, she becomes a strong supporter of Indigenous values. She also gathers herbs, pays attention to the wind, keeps up with rituals, and sets an example by caring for the land instead of owning it. Accordingly, her link with nature is presented in a manner that is almost supernatural. She notices changes in the weather, hears the land's cries and knows that what is being destroyed is more than just physical ruin; it is spiritual estrangement.

Linda Hogan talks about Nola Blanket as one of the women who is protected by bullets and others by memories. Through her quiet resistance, she guards what others can't see: the sacredness that lies underneath greed. Also, she shows a powerful truth: survival isn't always loud; sometimes it's a silent, steady presence that refuses to give up even when things go wrong and tragedy strikes. Nola's persona shows an Indigenous ecological perspective, which sees the human soul as being connected to grass, rivers, stones, and wind. People may think Linda Hogan is peaceful, yet she proves that her strength is in her resistance. The story is that she keeps the Osage homeland from going out by holding it the same way you would grasp a flame that is dying. Her life is an example of how to quietly fight back against current concepts of power. Nola becomes stronger, like a tree that cannot be blown over by storms, while other people fall in to fear or greed. The analysis confirms that Hogan's character battles against colonialism and emphasises that Indigenous women have a sacred duty to protect their land as the lifeblood of their people, not as property.

Throughout the story, Nola Blanket is a strong and good person. Even though her mother died, she is a symbol of the Indian community's yearning for cultural renewal and continuance. To be specific, her personality gives people hope in a world that is unhappy. Her naive view of life and love for traditional customs help her family get through tough times. Nola sees how money can drive people apart and turn holy ground into a place of violence. She is a bastion defending Indigenous values in a society that has changed due of colonisation and oil money. She can also detect when the weather changes, hear the land's cries, and know that the hurt that is happening beyond the physical is a spiritual separation. Even though death and injustice are all around her, Nola stays strong. This shows a key truth: survival isn't always obvious; sometimes it shows itself as a strong, inner presence.

Linda Hogan writes about Nola Blanket's strength in her art. Here, Nola is strong because she refuses to sell, forget, or let the spiritual bond end. She guards the Osage homeland as you would guard a lamp that is ready to go out. Her existence is a subtle way of standing up to current ideals about power. Hogan criticises colonial aggression in the story and illustrates how vital it is for Indigenous women to protect land, which they see as the most important aspect of their culture, not only as property. Also, the personalities show that the land will be alive as long as there are individuals who love it deeply and consistently. This study highlights that Stace Red Hawk, another character, stands for environmental justice and works to get multiple indigenous witnesses to speak up against the terrible things that have been done to them. He acts as a go-between for the federal government and the native people. Also, he appears to be the author's voice when it comes to the battle for land rights by indigenous people. Because of what he did, trials go on and some criminals are held. Stace Red Hawk's role as an intermediary, he reveals: *"We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children. And in returning it whole, we honor those who came before us and those yet to come."* (105) When Stace gets back to Sorrow Cave, he meets a lady called Cry. Thereby, she is a storyteller who keeps the oral tradition alive, which is a part of the culture of the indigenous people. Stace contemplates about his past and questions his sanity as he makes the risky trek to the Hill neighbourhood. He heads to the hills and has a hard time letting go of who he used to be. Moreover, his encounters with the earth and its spirit animals show how much his ancestry and history have influenced who he is now. As he makes his way through the real world, memories of his past and his ties to the Osage people cause him distress. These thoughts inspire him to learn more about his place in the community and the suffering they have endured. This touches him, and he resolves to seek justice.

It is ultimately revealed that Belle Graycloud, Nola Blanket and Stace Red Hawk are shown to be subalterns throughout the book. Taken together, these individuals are referred to as subalterns by Gayatri Spivak due to their social marginalisation and the fact that colonial, legal, and economic institutions often mute their voices. Belle is an elder in the tribe

and a spiritual protector. She uses her moral and cultural influence to stop others from taking advantage of the land. Despite having no formal power, her acts of saving animals, taking part in ceremonies, and claiming her sacred responsibilities show her dedication to protecting the Osage area. Thus, this illustrates the subaltern voice with actions instead of words.

Nola Blanket, a young child who is very attached to her family's customs, subtly and organically demonstrates subaltern agency when faced with challenges. Her unwillingness to sell property, her capacity to sense the suffering of the land, and her dedication to respecting and remembering her community's spiritual roots all point to a quiet but powerful subaltern voice. As a young Osage man, Stace Red Hawk battles harder to safeguard the land. He keeps a watch on and battles against things that take advantage of people, defends sacred locations, and cautions his community. It is evident that his acts indicate that those who are not in power may take charge outside of the mechanisms that are in place. A careful reading reveals that Stace speaks for the community by being bold, understanding the laws of his forefathers, and fighting back immediately. This tale demonstrates that the subaltern may acquire power via action in the absence of formal recognition.

The narrative makes it clear that Linda Hogan shows how strong Native American women are when they are oppressed and killed, showing how strong they are both as individuals and as a group. Hogan and her group have won a big win by getting legal recognition. After a protracted battle, they got certain safeguards for their land and resources. There are still many problems to solve, but this is a big step forward in the struggle for justice. She advised women to take up leadership positions in her community so that their views would be heard. Indigenous women's leadership is essential for the future due to their significant contributions to the survival of their communities in the past.

**As an acclaimed** novelist, Linda Hogan's characters all have their own views on the natural world and everything in it. Thomas's ability to move quietly, like snakes and lizards, is very important for his survival on the battlefield. Moreover, his eyes made him seem like a snake, and his movements were like those of a reptile. Besides, Thomas thinks that the land's natural wisdom is stronger than the weapons and explosives that the American military have. His survival skills and connection to the natural world. He says:

*The world is alive, and the land knows the stories of all who have walked on it. It holds memory, pain, and resilience, and those who listen carefully may learn to survive where others are destroyed. The violence done to the land mirrors the violence done to women and to the marginalized, and the survival of one depends on the survival of the other. (67)*

Linda Hogan writes on how she is worried about how unfairly nature and native people have power over her. She also talks about how women and indigenous people are treated unfairly. Ruth, like the whales that the boys killed in the Dark River, is a victim of male supremacy. Omishto in Power is like the endangered panther species in that it is a victim of male domination.

### 1.3Conclusion

Linda Hogan's *Mean Spirit* shows how people and the natural world rely on each other and are intertwined. She questions the Western view that nature is a dangerous place where people are cut off from it. Hogan's book talks about all the many ways people engage with nature. In her made-up stories, she put the lost connection between people and the environment back in its place. In the chosen pieces, the land rises above the background of human activity, becoming a spiritual presence. This study highlights that Belle Graycloud has a strong and sacred relationship to her land. She takes care of the soil and blesses the corn, which shows her cultural identity and how important farming is to her family and community. As evidenced, her fight to safeguard her past is shown by her efforts to keep her property safe from intruders. Her family's identity is based on their ancestral land, which provides them a spiritual connection and a family history, as well as a place to grow food. The analysis of Linda Hogan's story demonstrates that the characters have shown the restoration of their territory. People think that knowing and connecting with the earth can help people deal with the environmental difficulties we face today. Consequently, the research affirms that the chosen novels are compelling works that demonstrate literature's capacity to fulfil the need of land preservation.

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