CLIMATE JUSTICE FOR THE DEAD AND THE DYING:
WEAVING ETHICS OF PALLIATION AND REMEMBRANCE FROM STORY AND
PRACTICE

By

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**ABSTRACT**

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This dissertation investigates how past-oriented environmentalism is ill-equipped to attend to the irreversible harms of global climate change. Having long placed heavy emphasis on strategies—e.g., preservation, restoration, and conservation—that seek to ensure the environment of today and the future roughly mirror that of the past, environmentalism's practical and conceptual tools for grappling with what is owed to the dead and dying victims of environmental injustice have been woefully underdeveloped. Relying heavily upon the ethical/political contributions of Indigenous, Afrofuturist, and/or feminist science fiction fantasy, I explore the various dimensions of environmental palliation (for the dying of climate change) and remembrance (for the dead of climate change) and situate these—hypothetical and ongoing—practices in relation to the overlapping project of transformative environmental justice. Overall, the dissertation aims to aid in reorienting and expanding the scope of environmentalism in the hope that the unavoidable moral failures of climate injustice can be ameliorated as much as possible without enacting further violence upon either the living or dead.

This work is dedicated to the dead and the dying who have been my teachers.
I remember you,
My Dorothy's, DD and Dorrie,
Cutie,
Mama Squirrel,
Milo, Cira, Phoebe, Yuri, Pip, Pumpkin, MG, Marion, Una, Mika,
Gan, Pop Pop, Granddad, Grandma,
Sycamore and Maple.

And to Ryder Farm;
we have work to do.

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## INTRODUCTION

Right out of college I found myself with an internship and, eventually, a job at an environmental nonprofit devoted to salmon conservation. The work combined my Russian expertise and emerging interest in interspecies politics, and it made me feel of more use to the world than my early morning shifts at Starbucks. A common refrain at Wild Salmon Center (WSC) was that we were helping to protect the last, best salmon runs on the planet. All of these salmon "strongholds" were located across the northern Pacific rim. In fact, the unfortunate counterpoint to Pacific salmon as the last and the best was the lost cause of Atlantic salmon. Being from the Northeast I took some umbrage with this diagnosis but could recognize that salmon were at the heart of Pacific Northwest communities in a way that they have not been for quite some time along the Atlantic seaboard. Salmon, after all, function ecologically as a keystone species, as WSC would have us know.

Possessed of purpose and some idea (I thought) of what the loss of fisheries across a bioregion meant for salmon, humans, and the ecosystems they share, I threw myself into endeavors like that of researching and resisting the proposed Pebble Project. Located on a fault line at the headwaters of the Bristol Bay basin, the Pebble deposit is either "one of the greatest stores of mineral wealth ever discovered" (Northern Dynasty Minerals Ltd. 2019) or twenty eight square miles of ecological, economic, and cultural catastrophe waiting to happen if Northern Dynasty Minerals has their way. Opposed by a wide variety of local, national, and international stakeholders—including the majority of local Indigenous people and Tribal governing bodies (Delta Discovery 2019, United Tribes of Bristol Bay 2019)—, the mine's future remains uncertain even now. And while it may be that the work I did to oppose the Pebble Project could

result in more tangible, lasting impacts than my career in environmental philosophy ever will, I became increasingly uneasy with the conservation paradigm as time wore on. Preservation in particular—with all of its assumptions about wildness—rubbed me the wrong way, especially when seemingly paradoxically paired with the anthropocentric rhetoric of salmon as a natural resource.

During this time, I also started wondering about all those salmon rivers—even along the Pacific rim—that WSC and likeminded environmentalists did not consider worthwhile conservation targets. Though always very respectful and complementary of salmon restoration projects and organizations, WSC considered such work too costly and uncertain to warrant investing their own expertise or resources. The capital required was too great and the ecological deliverables too few. In fact, the implicit contrast between preservation and restoration was often employed when pitching to grantors and donors. A common strategy: accompany a potential donor on a fly-fishing trip to remote areas of Alaska or Siberia accessible only to those (outsiders) willing to pay thousands of dollars an hour to be helicoptered in and out, marvel at the beauty and abundance of salmon in the wild, and implore upon these fish(ing) enthusiasts to safeguard these pristine and, sadly, all too uncommon riparian treasures. I pondered and continue to ponder whether WSC has been forced to adapt its message to appeal to the worldview and interests of wealthy patrons whose primary mode of connection to salmon is through elite fly-fishing or whether these are simply the types of donors WSC catches by baiting the hook with the rhetoric of the last and the best. Ultimately, at WSC, restoration didn't pay; it could deliver neither the financial backing nor the environmental future they fought so hard to secure.

I have no doubt that the communities of the Bristol Bay watershed would be better off without the Pebble Project. But this certitude does little to answer the question of what ought to

be done if the worst were to happen, if the mine were excavated and, afterwards, even nine miles and 700ft of dams proved unequal to the task of keeping 2.5 billion tons of tailings from finding their way into the Nushagak and Kvichak Rivers. Would WSC continue to do work in Bristol Bay? Would any conservation group? Perhaps environmental restoration organizations would move in or pop up. Perhaps, having spent so long championing the region, WSC would even stretch themselves and their mission to partner with some of them. All of this assumes, however, that environmentalists would not declare Bristol Bay a lost cause. If, as WSC's *Pebble Report* (2012) claims, the Pebble Project "has the potential to permanently degrade Bristol Bay ecosystems," even massive restoration[1] efforts would be likely to prove ineffective. Bristol Bay fisheries could go the way of their Atlantic counterparts and environmentalists' work would be done.

Of course, the hypothetical of a post-Pebble Bristol Bay is unnecessary for mulling over mainstream environmentalism's practical and ideological scope. Mining contamination of ground and surface waters is extremely common (WSC 2012). In the United States alone, more than 156 hard rock mining sites have had or are likely to result in Superfund liabilities exceeding a million dollars (USEPA 2004, WSC 2012). Indeed, the disturbing regularity of tailings dam failures is prominently highlighted in the *Pebble Report* in the form of more than a dozen case studies featured throughout the document. These mines are presented as cautionary tales and, as WSC intended, it is not hard to picture the Pebble Project among them. Likewise, it is easy to imagine Bristol Bay post-Pebble being strategically employed by environmentalists as a cautionary tale. Certainly, the story of how this once pristine ecosystem attained Superfund status would go far in convincing grantors and donors to support conservation projects

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[1] As traditionally conceived of and practiced by mainstream environmentalists and environmental philosophers.

elsewhere, especially if such work involved resisting mineral extraction. What is strangely more difficult to envision is the robust presence of environmentalists in a watershed whose preservation days are over and whose restoration potential is extremely limited. Beyond containment and redevelopment—projects generally left to the EPA and their local partners—, there would seem to be nothing more that environmentalism can or should do under such circumstances.

Despite taking seriously the severity and prevalence of environmental threats and harms, the crisis discipline(s) of environmentalism and environmental ethics[2]—however you want to arrange those Venn diagrams—has long placed heavy emphasis on strategies that seek to ensure the environment of today and the future roughly mirror that of the past. Since global climate change has lodged itself at the heart of the discipline, however, past-oriented approaches and norms have come under increasing scrutiny. Framing the project of environmental ethics as one that seeks to ensure that the future roughly mirrors "the past" seems now to be at odds with "the facts," and organizations like WSC appear, at best, to be occupying a smaller and smaller ecological/ethical niche. Indeed, many environmental ethicists have latched firmly onto the idea of an Anthropocene Epoch and with it the tragic inevitability of planetwide ecological change. Strategies like preservation, restoration, and (more recently) mitigation are increasingly being considered alongside what can arguably be understood as transformative dimensions/endeavors, e.g., sustainability and adaptation.

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[2] I take the project of ethics to be the work of critically engaging with and puzzling through the realities and possibilities of living with others towards the goal of doing so well/better. This is also how I define politics. I understand the difference between ethics and politics—in the Western canon—as largely ideological and methodological. One (ethics) has tended to have a more individualistic, moral focus and the other (politics) has adopted more a societal/legal bent. I distinguish between the two when it feels important to make note of the scope of the ideas/methods in question; but for my own work I aim to keep the boundary porous. Figuring out, for example, what ought to be done in response to climate change and how to work towards environmental/climate justice are not separate ideas/projects, even if the disciplinary geography of environmental ethics—as well as philosophy in general—makes them seem like they are.

And, yet, transformative environmental ethics is still conceptualized in large part as that which could pull humanity back from the brink of disaster or, at least, prevent the worst of it. The discipline struggles to recognize that many peoples, communities, species, and ecosystems have long been and will continue to be pushed past "the brink." As a result of both the trend towards past-oriented environmentalism and the limited histories and futurities around which much of Anthropocenic climate change discourse is currently oriented, practical and conceptual tools for grappling with what is owed to the dead and dying victims of environmental injustice have been and continue to be woefully underdeveloped. Without such tools it is all too easy for those—living or dead—who cannot be aided by traditional past-oriented environmentalism to be labeled as lost/impossible causes, effectively shuffling them off the ethical radar. Circumscribing the ethical terrain in this way has always been deeply problematic, but this oversight grows every more glaring as various vectors of environmental injustice converge and intensify through global climate change. The work of envisioning and building transformative environmental futurities must be invested in the overlapping project of attending to those whose lives/futures have been unjustly curtailed if it is to succeed.

This dissertation is carved into three primary sections. The first digs deeply into the problem of past-oriented environmentalism introduced briefly above. Chapter One begins by exploring the roots of mainstream environmental philosophies that believe the environment of the future can/ought to resemble that of the Past. Far from being apolitical, the past-oriented ethical paradigm is invested in preserving a very particular eco-political status quo that sustains the environmentally privileged at great cost to Others, both human and nonhuman. And while climate change destabilizes these exploitative ecologies/temporalities in some ways, mainstream environmentalism's reluctant acknowledgment of (at least) the potential of an irreversibly altered

future (i.e., the Anthropocene) has done little to undermine the idea that the most desirable environmental futurities are those most closely resembling a selectively idealized past. Ultimately, I argue that past-oriented values, strategies, and frameworks—including the Anthropocene hypothesis—are insufficient for environmental ethics in the time of climate change, especially with regards to the dead and the dying. Attending to the unjustly dying/dead of climate change—without either giving up on the future or clinging to the past—demands more/other than guilty grief, necromantic restoration practices, and symbolic memorial.

The second part of the project outlines and justifies my methodology for developing environmental/climate ethics for the dead and the dying with the aid of texts located at the fringes of or well beyond mainstream environmental philosophy. Environmental ethics/justice for the dead and the dying are not new endeavors, though their theory and practice are extremely limited within past-oriented environmental discourses. Thus, I rely heavily upon texts that do not typically qualify as environmental ethics or even philosophy. Specifically, I call on (post)apocalyptic Indigenous, Afrofuturist, and/or feminist science fiction fantasy as well as expert lived practices to highlight shifting assemblages of environmental palliation and remembrance. Before I employ this methodology, however, I want to be transparent about which texts I am working with and how/why I engage with them. The bulk of this chapter is organized around three queries: (i) why involve narratives in ethics? (ii) what does science fiction have to offer environmental ethics? and (iii) what does (post)apocalyptic science fiction fantasy know about global climate change? Attending to these questions from broadest to narrowest enables me to articulate in detail how Indigenous, Afrofuturist, and/or feminist science fiction fantasy narratives employ the trope of (post)apocalypse to (re)describe, subvert, and sustain communities through the conditions of world-ending environmental injustice and towards transformative

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futurities. Growing out of and in response to kindred world endings and injustices, the lived practices I call upon are likewise invested in liberatory worldbuilding. Together, narrative and practice provide each other with much needed support, context, and contrast.

The third, and most substantial, piece of the dissertation gets down to the actual business of weaving together story and practice into palliative ethics for the dying and remembrance ethics for the dead. Here, the ethics/practices of palliation and remembrance are considered both separately for what makes them distinct as well as by way of their numerous commonalities. On its own, palliation is the ethic/practice of attending to the dying by easing their suffering and providing them with good/better deaths. The acknowledgement, care, and support palliation can offer are the very least that the dying deserve, even if they still fall far short of what is owed. The practice of palliation under conditions of moral failure highlights the complexities of facilitating or even choosing death in the (post)apocalypse as well as the importance of understanding such determinations within their eco-political context(s). Also responding to irreversible moral failure, remembrance is an ethic/practice for keeping the dead alive in memory so that they can be cared for in body and/or spirit. Remembrance is complicated by the need to balance grief with joy as well as the needs of the living with those of the dead. Both palliation and remembrance are situated, expert practices that serve to publicly bear witness to death and offer paths forward. As directional and holistic practices/ethics, remembrance and palliation are necessary facets of transformative environmental justice and futurities. The relationships, expertise, values, and ideologies necessary for their successful practice are corrosive to the linear temporality and incomplete intergenerational ethics that maintain past-oriented environmentalism. For the purposes of providing authorial transparency and a concrete example of the dangers, limitations, and potential of attending to the dead and the dying on the land, this chapter is bookended by

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narrative reflections regarding memory, futurity, and interspecies eco-politics on my family farm outside New York City.

I conclude by considering how the linkages between (i) the ethics/practices palliation and remembrance and (ii) transformative environmental justice make particularly salient the need for understandings of climate change that both transcend the tragi-comic apocalyptic binary and embrace nonlinear temporalities. Remembrance and palliation belong neither to past-oriented nor nihilistic environmentalisms, but to intergenerational politics for working towards the hope of climate justice.

# CHAPTER ONE

## Bring out Your Dead (and Dying):

## When Past-Oriented Environmentalism Isn't Enough

### I: Introduction

This project takes as foundational that death does not dissolve our relationships—ethical, political, or otherwise—with our ecological partners. Here, my philosophical, ethical, political, and spiritual commitment stems largely from the texts and practices that initially inspired this work. In these fictional and nonfictional contexts, the dead are not consigned to the past. Instead they are constant companions who, like the living, shape and are shaped by us physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. The dead are among the beings from whom we learn, for whom we act, and with whom we create and maintain community. This is not to say that death does not alter these relationships and, in so doing, us. Of particular significance to environmental ethics in the time of climate change is that the emotional and political poignancy of these bonds—and the resulting obligations—are especially pronounced when these deaths, like survivable harms, are unjust.[3] As with other irreversible harms, unsurvivable manifestations of environmental injustice can and ought to be ameliorated even if, as is often the case, the best that can be hoped for still involves significant moral failure.

It might be supposed that environmentalisms thoroughly mired in the past would be particularly attentive to those no longer with us or soon to be among them, i.e., the dead and the dying. The mainstream environmental discourse, however, has long been far more concerned

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[3] I am aware that extinction ethicists (e.g., Cafaro 2015) have been working to distill what (if anything) qualifies extinction as harmful/unjust. This literature, however, tends to frame death/extinction as a terminus for interspecies relationships/ethics. As such, it does not serve as the launching point for this project.

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with preventing irreversible losses than with attending to them directly. Even when, as with

global climate change, environmental threats get framed apocalyptically, the ethical and practical

strategies that dominate are almost exclusively geared towards survivors (e.g., preservation,

restoration, mitigation, and adaptation). Indeed, the aim of this chapter is, ultimately, to argue

that past-oriented values, strategies, and frameworks are insufficient for environmental ethics in

the time of climate change[4], especially with regards to the dead and the dying. In order to

accomplish this, I will first need to establish what past-oriented environmental ethics is/are and

why they are inadequate for climate change. From here I can begin to craft my argument for how

environmentalism can better attend to the dead and the dying of climate change as well as

other/related environmental injustices.[5]

Parts II and III provide critical summaries of the literature—prior to and in the wake of

climate change respectively—with the aim of highlighting the prominence of past-oriented

ethical thinking and what sorts of dimensions and projects get passed over or silenced as a result.

Part IV begins with a discussion of where environmental ethics departs most from a past-

orientated approach and, thus, comes closest to securing justice for the dead and the dying. With

the complementary goal of not overlooking mainstream environmentalism's best attempts, I then

explore emerging case studies for attending to the dead of climate change in the form of

extinction memorials, affective analyses, and de-extinction endeavors. The section concludes by

(i) advancing reasons for thinking that environmental ethics in the time of climate change ought

to be attending to the dead *and* the dying directly/contextually and (ii) arguing that selective

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[4] This admittedly clunky phrase occurs frequently in this dissertation. I employ this rhetoric with the intention of gesturing towards the nexus of environmental injustices that include global climate change without (hopefully) making the same mistake that Anthropocene discourse does of lumping them all under the convenient, yet problematic, umbrella of Anthropos. And though climate change is centered in my project, I do not limit my discussion of environmental harms/injustices to its direct consequences.
[5] An endeavor developed more fully in Chapter 3.

symbolic memorials and scholarship confined to the affective dimensions of guilty grief are inadequate for these tasks. Learning how to bear witness to and ease the suffering of the dying, facilitate good deaths when possible, and practice active remembrance for the dead are crucial components of climate justice, especially if this project is to produce and be part of a truly transformative environmental paradigm. Practices and theories committed to centering the wild—last, best, or recovering—are no longer sufficient, if they ever were.

## II: A Past-Oriented Ethical Paradigm

In the wake of my time at Wild Salmon Center, my unease about environmentalism's cadre of lost causes may have gradually faded had it not been for the fact that every foray I made into academic environmental ethics provided further evidence that this was not just a practical issue—i.e., one dictated purely by funding—but a philosophical one with deep theoretical roots. This section provides an analysis of the linkages between mainstream environmental ethics' normative assumptions and temporal orientation prior to (the focus on) climate change. Specifically, I detail how the wilderness crisis inherited from North American environmentalism continues to shape contemporary environmental ethics' strategies and goals even as its understanding of the more than human world has become increasingly sophisticated and, in some ways, less violent. Building upon this analysis, I argue that much of the discourse has made itself structurally resistant to both transformative futurities and a robust politics of death and dying.

### A. Wilderness in Crisis

Environmental philosophers ranging from Michael Soule (1985) to Arne Naess (1990) to Holmes Rolston (1994) have framed their work through the lens of ecological crisis. At the heart of crisis is the necessity of swift response. As Soule (1985) notes, in a crisis discipline one must act before having gathered all the facts. Crisis is a temporal punctuation, not someplace you

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could or would want to live. Action is necessary for moving beyond the moment of crisis and effecting its outcome; that is, to prevent, undo, and shape the changes that crises promise or deliver. If—as is often the case—these changes are deemed unfavorable, then crises are defined in relationship to the threats that produce them. This framing is evident in much of contemporary environmental(ism) ethics, though the precise nature of such threats does vary considerably even within the mainstream discourse (e.g., Leopold 1949, Carson 1962, Soule 1985, Kareiva and Marvier 2012). In general, however, there is considerable agreement about the broad terms of what is under threat or in crisis—the environment and, implicitly or explicitly, the lifeways associated with(in) it—and from whom—humans and/or their activities. Indeed, this would seem to be the central problem around which the as yet unsettled discipline of environmental(ism) ethics has long oriented itself (Weston 1992).

Exactly what/who constitutes the environment and who/what threatens it determine the shape of ecological crisis and what count as appropriate responses or remedies. As has received much critical attention, contemporary environmental(ism) ethics have been heavily influenced by the North American conservation movement and the wilderness ideal around which it was oriented (Plumwood 1993, Callicott and Nelson 1998, Cuomo 1998, Thompson 2010). Dating back to the latter half of the 19th century, this paradigm established wilderness as the environment. Fraught with internal contradictions—wilderness is both pristine and godless, something to be thoroughly used and devoutly safeguarded, both static and evolving—, this normative lodestone has long haunted environmental discourse within and beyond academia.[6] And while many contemporary ethicists and environmentalists recognize the problematic nature of this paradigm and, instead, opt to frame environmental crises in terms of harms to ecosystems,

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[6] As evidenced by Wild Salmon Center's organizing principle of "the last and the best."

species, etc., aspects of the wilderness ideal continue to subtly pervade thinking around what can and ought to be done to address environmental crises as well as the very framing of environmental ethics as a crisis discipline.

Rather than rehash the many excellent critiques of the wilderness ideal (e.g., Plumwood 1993, Callicott and Nelson 1998, Cuomo 1998, Kimmerer 2013), I have chosen to highlight those elements of this work most salient to my analysis moving forward. Traditional conservationism is deeply problematic insofar as it assumes that humans and nature come neatly apart for the dual purposes of veneration and subjugation. Building upon the long political trend to deny full human—and thereby moral/political—status to all but a select few, the notion of wilderness is directly involved in gendered, racialized, colonial violence and oppression, in particular the historical and ongoing practice of commandeering "uncivilized" land and bodies so that they could/can be properly managed and profited from. As Callicott and Nelson (1998, 5) remark, "The first criticism of the wilderness idea was voiced by those upon whom it was imposed and those whom it dispossessed," i.e., those erased from consciousness and conscience. Bristol Bay, for example, has been a working fishery for thousands of years. What makes these salmon wild? Insofar as it relies upon or bolsters the wilderness ideal, the modern mainstream conservation paradigm is materially and ideologically invested in a political project by which a very particular group of people have gotten to decide what constitutes the environment, its proper uses, and the ends/futures that it ought to serve. Keeping these politics in mind, I turn to environmental(ism) ethics' primary strategies for resolving ecological crisis—preservation and restoration.

Traditional conservation strategies are premised upon the idea that environmental crises are caused by human abuse of and encroachment upon nature *but* that we can—and ought to—

hold back this tide by limiting unjustified human involvement (e.g., Leopold 1949, Naess 2010, Katz 2012). Likewise, even environmental theorists and practitioners that actively attempt to distance themselves from the wilderness ideal operate under the assumption that—provided sufficient material and political resources—habitats and species can be preserved even when humans are closely involved (e.g., Kareiva and Marvier 2012, Callicott 2013). Either way, the call to preempt, repair, or mitigate anthropogenic ecological destruction has become the normative force behind modern environmental ethics. Crises can be averted by reining ourselves in if not out. Resolving these unsustainable temporal/material anomalies (i.e., crises) is possible if we act decisively to restore balance.

## B. A Two-Pronged Strategy

Perhaps the most common strategy for pursuing balance/sustainability has been environmental preservation or protection. I understand the theory/practice of preservation as the safeguarding of habitats, ecosystems, species, etc. whose health/integrity has not yet been unduly compromised. In common environmental parlance, preservation and conservation are used somewhat interchangeably. Indeed, in my introduction to this chapter I couched WSC's mission to preserve wild salmon as conservation. Because it is. Here and elsewhere, environmental conservation is an umbrella term for all sorts of activities pertaining to the protection and/or management of the more than human world. The lasting influence of the wilderness ideal has meant that conservation—in name and practice—is very often synonymous with the championing of "intact" entities, generally with the aim of keeping them that way. My introduction was also strongly suggestive of the sort of critiques of traditional preservation and, thereby, conservation that feminists and others have made over the years (e.g., Cuomo 1998, Grosz 2003, Kareiva and Marvier 2012, Vogel 2015). For the sake of argument, let us assume

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that the concept/practice of preservation can be sundered from the wilderness ideal, i.e., that is

possible to wish and work to maintain an ecological paradigm without adopting a binary of

human/nature or the problematic politics that come along with either an ecocentric or

anthropocentric notion of the wild.[7] Whether or not any other wilderness baggage accompanies

preservation-as-stasis remains to be seen.

Of course, the diagnosis of a crisis of wilderness or, eschewing that, of ecology/biology

would not have occurred if environmental harms/degradation/imbalance were not considered to

be on the rise. Preservation is a preemptive strategy that seeks to prevent these wrongs from

happening elsewhere. After calling for a halt to environmental wrongdoing—something that

environmentalists do quite vociferously and of which environmental philosophers have long

pondered the necessary and sufficient conditions—, restoration is the next logical step.

Restoration is traditionally thought of as the process of reversing, as opposed to "merely"

healing, environmental destruction to species, habitats, and ecosystems (Katz 2012, Light 2012).

While some have argued that restoration is impossible due to the unavoidable taint of human

intentionality that renders ecosystems into artifacts (Katz 2012), many environmental ethicists

consider restoration to be a possible and laudable, if practically challenging, goal (e.g., Light

2012, Sandler 2012a, 2012b). There are many reasons that environmentalists recommend

restoration, ranging from taking ethical responsibility for the damage humans have caused to the

instrumental value of resources (Soule 1985, Karieva and Marvier 2012). As one Atlantic

salmon[8] restoration organization articulates, "We hope to reverse these declining trends,

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[7] I would cite Whyte and Cuomo's (2016) "Ethics of Caring in Environmental Ethics: Indigenous and Feminist Philosophies" as a text that makes use of the concept of (conservation as) preservation while resisting the wilderness ideal/trope.
[8] Indeed, not all conservationists consider Atlantic Salmon to be a lost cause.

restoring the fish populations so intrinsically linked with recreation, the economy, and a clean

and functional environment in Maine" (Atlantic Salmon Restoration 2019).

Central to restoration-as-reversal *and* preservation-as-stasis is the high value associated

with ecological integrity and historical continuity/fidelity, both of which serve as defining

features of and reasons for pursuing restoration as well as conservation in general (Leopold

1949, Norton 1987, Callicott and Mumford 1997). The positive valuation of ecological integrity

and historical continuity/fidelity can be traced in part to the wilderness ideal, though it has been

argued that neither necessarily rely upon it (Thompson 2010, Sandler 2012a, Vogel 2014).

Genealogically, at least, this linkage is demonstrated through the literature's long history of

positively valuing the integrity, purity, and historical continuity/fidelity of natural systems in

dualistic opposition to the negative valuation of artificiality, usability[9], and rupture (Plumwood,

1993, Cuomo 1998, Thompson 2010). Relatedly, even as they eschewed the isolationist aspect of

the wilderness ideal, restoration advocates relied (until more recently[10]) upon the corollary

concept of ecological systems as harmonious, balanced, self-maintaining, or constant (e.g.,

Leopold 1949, Soule 1985, Callicott 2013). Despite adopting Darwinian models/theories in many

other important regards, the twinkle of crystalline spheres has long accompanied the restoration

discourse, a result of its internalization of the wilderness paradigm's vision of nature as constant

and humans as the sole agents of change (Grosz 2005). This has made restoration-as-reversal the

perfect (though admittedly less glamorous) partner to preservation-as-stasis in theory and in

practice. Two sides of the same coin, together they have long occupied the majority of the space

underneath the umbrella of environmental conservation.

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[9] As I remarked earlier, contradictions abound.
[10] As will be discussed shortly in Part III.

## C. The Problem of Past-Oriented Ethics

Preservation and restoration operate so well together because they rely upon an overlapping/complementary set of normative, material/practical, and temporal assumptions. Even when the more obviously odious elements of the wilderness ideal have been successfully purged, the positive valuation and pursuit of historical continuity/fidelity remains. While preservation seeks the continuation of what long has been, restoration aims to reestablish what once was. And with these two strategies/projects cornering the market on environmental(ism) ethics, the overall discourse has acquired a "past-oriented" or backwards ethical approach as the result of this temporal convergence. By "past-oriented" I do not mean to imply that contemporary environmental(ism) ethics has not been concerned for the future—far from it. Rather, the goal has been to "minimize losses and, to the extent that this is possible, to maintain the world as it once was" (Kareiva and Marvier 2012, 967). In other words, the mainstream environmental discourse has long sought to ensure that the future mirrors the past as much as possible. Thus, popular environmental futurities have largely come to be defined by efforts to pause or rewind the ecological clock.

Preservation, restoration, and the past-oriented environmental paradigm in general make two assumptions about preserving/restoring "the past," both of which reveal and give rise to deeply troubling eco-politics. In practice and in theory, past-oriented environmental ethics has traditionally assumed that historical continuity and fidelity are attainable goals, i.e., that the past *can* be reclaimed and held onto. That being said, even prior to climate change, the discourse has never claimed that all environmental harms/wrongdoing could be undone. It was widely acknowledged that some species, habitats, ecosystems, forms-of-life, etc.—once broken—cannot be repaired (Sandler 2012b). However, the literature traditionally provided minimal

consideration to these lost causes except to lament the passing of the dead or motivate stronger environmental protections. Additionally, environmentalism's temporal orientation itself heavily implies that these tragedies are not as numerous as the opportunities for preservation and restoration. For if they were, it would be hard to reconcile the discourse's priorities with reality. Thus, the dearth of strategies for attending to lost causes has served as evidence of their practical irrelevance. At the same time, the crisis discourses of environmental ethics and, even more so, environmentalism often frame their work as triage, a sad but necessary business (Soule 1985, Kareiva and Marvier 2012). From both angles, the questionable narrative that restoration and preservation are all that we *can* do has allowed environmental(ism) ethics to gloss over the (i) existence of and, thereby, (ii) our obligations to those for whom the clock has stopped, namely the dead and the dying.

Furthermore, the possibility that healing from environmental harms/wrongdoing might *necessarily* involve change for survivors had rarely been entertained in the mainstream discourse until more recently. Even then, however, change is generally something to grieve or be resigned to in those "few" circumstances where the past *cannot* be reclaimed. Moreover, critiques of traditional restoration approaches have been largely motivated by the latest biological/ecological scientific theories with regards to the feasibility of reversal (Light 2012, Sandler 2012a). In other trauma discourses (e.g., queer theory, gendered violence) healing and change have been productive partners, for the goal of healing is not to return individuals or communities to exactly the way things were before suffering harm (Cvetkovich 2003, Boesten and Wilding 2015, Walker 2015). Instead, the restorative process is about surviving, growing, and seeking justice. With trauma situated within larger patterns of preexisting structural violence, the question of feasibility is largely overshadowed by considerations of desirability. By contrast, the past-

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oriented approach operates upon the assumption that the environment of the past *should* be recovered and maintained. Environmental harms/wrongdoing are akin to invasive species, temporally punctuated and geographically aberrant. A future mirroring the past is not only possible, it is *desirable*.

This presumption/assertion is problematic in many regards, many of which become readily apparent when we pause to consider just which past state of affairs are to be sought after and to whom they are desirable. With preservation-as-stasis as the gold standard, the bullseye that restoration traditionally aimed for was the time just prior to anthropogenic destabilization of a longstanding ecological equilibrium. When analyzed individually, restoration chronologies vary widely. When considered collectively, these times/states are generally characterized by the absence of any human involvement that could pose a threat to target ecological entities and/or their responsible management. Historical fidelity and continuity thereby operate as stand-ins for wilderness, with many of the same contradictions intact. This framing succeeds in collapsing time, humanity, and the environment in ways that many have argued underlie and further colonial lifeways (e.g., de la Cadena 2010, Tuck and Yang 2012, Whyte 2017). The idea that the best and only way to way to regain something lost to the present is to backtrack only works if the past selected is someplace you would want to live. Despite championing the abundance and diversity of life, the future targeted by mainstream environmental(ism) ethics is distinctly inhospitable to human and nonhuman others alike. In this context, as with MAGA ideology, the past is most appealing to those who have the most to lose by change—e.g., those whose worlds have not ended time and time again, complicating or irrevocably sundering their connection to the past. As Kyle Whyte (2017, 207) observes, "the environmental impacts of settler colonialism have made it so that quite a few Indigenous peoples in North America are no longer able to relate

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locally to many of the plants and animals that are significant to them…some Indigenous peoples already inhabit what our ancestors would have likely characterized as a dystopian future."

Considered together and in context, restoration and preservation are revealed as tools for preserving a very particular eco-political status quo. The underdevelopment of non-past-oriented futurities and strategies has not been accidental; transformative environmental justice is structurally incompatible with traditional conservation's temporal and normative framework. Likewise, grappling seriously with lost causes—instead of just lamenting or instrumentalizing them—has risked revealing the true scope of environmental wrongdoings/harms and, with it, the imperative of transformation. To characterize the environment as in crisis overlooks the reality that the current state of affairs is not, in fact, a temporal anomaly. This inhospitable terrain is not only someplace we do live but where many have lived (and died) for a long time. Moreover, this habitat is one that environmental conservation has helped to shape and actively worked to maintain under the guise of The Past.

**III: A Crisis Discipline in Crisis**

Global climate change has deeply affected the theory and practice of environmental(ism) ethics. Though this phenomenon is far from the only widespread anthropogenic environmental threat to preoccupy environmentalists in the twenty first century, climate change has rapidly come to define the terms of environmental discourse within and beyond the academy, especially insofar as it serves as the linchpin of the Anthropocene. Indeed, the popularity of the Anthropocene diagnosis has helped to establish climate change initiatives as a matter of environmental (in)justice (i.e., having to do with strategies for addressing longstanding, systemic violence/inequity) rather than/in addition to ethics (i.e., strategies for preventing and understanding the nature of environmental harms). Put another way, by throwing a wrench into

traditional notions of agency, ecology, humanity, and statehood, global climate change has

further undermined the artificial barrier between environmental ethics and justice, thereby

making formerly marginalized justice-oriented methodologies/analyses more mainstream. And

as a discourse increasingly preoccupied with injustice and loss—of the Past, of the living, of the

future—, a defining feature of any approach to climate justice must be how (well) it understands

and attends to these tragedies/losses.

This section traces the discursive shifts precipitated by climate change understood to have

(at least) the potential to push humanity and the environment past the brink. Ultimately, I argue

that although global climate change is acknowledged to pose significant challenges to traditional

notions of historicity and nature, past-oriented normative assumptions steadily persist within

mainstream environmentalism for and in the time of climate change. Ironically, these valuations

and temporalities are sustained in large part through the totalizing apocalyptic framing of the

Anthropocene. While many have accepted that the environment of the future cannot mirror the

past, responses to climate change are still overwhelmingly couched in terms of limiting its

impact. As a result, transformative approaches[11] to environmental ethics/justice—though more

numerous and sophisticated than ever—have been restricted in scope to sustainability and

reluctant adaptation. And though mounting casualties are central to understanding climate

change as an unprecedented environmental crisis, the perceived proliferation of the dead/dying

has yet to spark a robust conversation regarding what we ought to be doing for those who will

not survive. As such, mainstream approaches to climate justice are both misdirected and

incomplete.

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[11] I do not include tragic apocalypse or nihilism among these approaches to environmental transformation. Giving in to or rejoicing in climate change are (at best) insufficient to accomplish transformative climate justice.

## A. Descriptive Analysis

As discussed in the previous section, environmental ethics has always been understood as something of a crisis discipline; long have its charges been regarded as under siege and imperiled. The dramatic increase in environmental destruction over the course of the twentieth century served to amplify and cement this perception (Soule 1985, Callicott and Nelson 1998). In one sense, global warming has not changed much; environmentalism was already on high alert. And, yet, scientists' increasingly alarming warnings regarding the irreversible, widespread environmental destruction that climate change will inevitably cause had (and continue to have) a resounding impact on the discourse. Rightly or wrongly, global climate change has come to be regarded as a different sort of crisis, one with almost unimaginably dire consequences (e.g., Chakrabarty 2009, Morton 2013). With scientists forecasting a sixth mass extinction event, the "unprecedented" scale of loss promised/threatened by climate change has become a common, albeit somewhat fraught, refrain (Cafaro and Primack 2014, Mitchell 2017). Likewise, even for those who survive, life in the post-climate change world is projected to be much altered. Of course, the scale(s) upon which climate change operates would perhaps not be so concerning if its effects where not shaping up to be quite so permanent and/or deadly. The narrative around climate change is increasingly one of a planet and a species balanced on the edge of a knife (Schatz 2012, Gaard 2014, Haraway 2015).

Once past tipped past this brink there can be no coming back, no rewinding of the clock. Climate change is as much a temporal as an ecological schism. Significant doubts have emerged within the literature as to whether environmentalism can succeed in the present/future simply by upscaling its existing theoretical and practical strategies (e.g., Thompson, & Bendik-Keymer 2012, Callicott 2013). Indeed, in his latest treatise Callicott (2013, 117-8) writes, "The temporal

and spatial scales of global climate change, which is the overarching environmental concern of the first century of the third millennium, require a thorough rethinking of ethical theory and moral philosophy."[12] Not just environmental ethics' particular tools but its overall framework have been called into question by the sprawling scope and permanence of this "planetary" event. The future feels highly uncertain; concepts, as well as species, are on the move (Chakrabartky 2009, Light 2012).

Furthermore, as an anthropogenic phenomenon with lasting planetary consequences, global climate change is framed as a threat to nature/wilderness itself. Since no place will escape the effects of anthropogenic climate change, in the post-climate change world human influence will be everywhere and nature nowhere (Vogel 2015). While few, if any, environmentalists consider the tragedy/injustice of climate change to end there, that "humanity's" presence will be literally carried by the winds to the remotest corners of the earth is widely regarded, implicitly or explicitly, as disturbing (Lepori 2015). In fact, the anthropogenic quality of global climate change has become so analytically crucial that it has helped give rise to the Anthropocene hypothesis. The Anthropocene has been proposed as a new geological epoch in which the collective actions of humans begin to influence earth systems in marked, unprecedented ways. Though the precise start date and causes of the epoch are continually debated by scientists and humanities scholars alike, the underlying concept has become so widely accepted that a thriving interdisciplinary literature/discourse has emerged around the Anthropocene, i.e., a nexus of anthropogenic ecological catastrophe with climate destabilization at its heart. What makes this cluster of crises different is not only the quality (permanent, unavoidable) and scale (spatially and temporally sprawling) of the environmental harms/wrongdoing but their collective

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[12] Even moral philosophy cannot escape climate change.

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existential feel (world-shattering/ending) (Chakrabartky 2009, Cuomo 2011, Morton 2013).

Human relationships to the natural world have reached a critical juncture and now the species'

very "ongoingness" is at stake (Sandler 2012b, Shiva 2012, Haraway 2015). It's the end of the

world as "we" know it; flood and other apocalyptic narratives/metaphors abound (Garrard 2012,

Gaard 2014, Rigby 2015). What can environmental ethics do in the face of such destruction if

not fight to hold back the tide and, failing that, weather the storm as best we can?

In response to the unprecedented crisis of Anthropocenic climate change,

environmentalism has worked diligently to reconceptualize and/or supplement traditional

conservation strategies. Even though pulling the planet back from the brink of disaster by staving

off the worst of climate change remains a popular overarching goal/theme, the discourse has

shifted such that preservation and restoration (as previously imagined and practiced) are no

longer regarded as sufficient. As Kareiva and Marvier (2012, 968) conclude after overhauling

conservation biology, "Given the magnitude of human impacts and change, conservation cannot

look only to the past. Instead it must be about choosing a future for people and nature." Indeed,

within the mainstream conservation discourse environmental historicity is consciously being

deemphasized or reframed. It remains to be seen, however, if such trends have altered

environmentalism enough to make space—other than at the fringes—for transformative

approaches and the dead/dying.

As previously noted, the wilderness ideal had already been steadily on the decline within

mainstream environmental(ism) ethics for some time, at least on the surface. The advent of both

climate change and the Anthropocene have further destabilized this normative framework.

Therefore, either environmentalism's understanding of wilderness or preservation must be

overhauled, ideally both.[13] Perhaps unsurprisingly given its increasing unpopularity, advocates of

preservation have tended to go the route of reconceptualizing the wild/natural entities that fall

under the purview of preservation. Even prior to climate change, voices on the periphery of

environmental ethics (e.g., ecofeminists, deep ecologists) expressed vehement opposition to the

idea that nature could/ought to be cordoned off from/for humans (e.g., Plumwood 1993, Naess

1990, Cuomo 1998). These formerly fringe approaches have gained significant purchase in the

time of climate change, and the literature is now rife with examples of authors who understand

not only that preservation always occurs within human-altered landscapes but that human and

ecological dynamics are inescapably intertwined (e.g., Kareiva and Marvier 2012, Sandler

2012b, Thompson and Bendik-Keymer 2012, Vogel 2015). That the proper targets of

preservation are those that remain *relatively* intact and un/depopulated of humans, however,

remains largely constant. Preservation work is not to be mistaken for restoration. Though the

Anthropocene undoubtedly brings the two projects closer together, preservation and restoration

remain distinct. Furthermore, mainstream environmentalism has yet to target urban, suburban, or

cultivated lands for preservation (Thompson 2010). The linkage between preservation and the

past—i.e., where humans fade into the background or exist fully[14] elsewhere—endures, however

tenuously. Likewise, the tendency for preservation to play into extractive patterns and

relationships persists (e.g., Kareiva and Marvier 2012)

　　　　While the distance separating preservation and restoration has shrunk alongside the

wilderness, the distinction between them has become more meaningful than ever. Preservation

may have moved closer to traditional understandings of restoration, but restoration itself has

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[13] Indeed, it seems unlikely that one could be altered without affecting the other; the concepts grew together and, as I
attempted to show in the last section, continue to be tethered in spite of concerted efforts to sunder them.
[14] That is, as full humans, beings easily differentiated from their surroundings.

undergone significant alterations that challenge the normative centrality of historicity as conceived of by and developed alongside the wilderness ideal. Specifically, historical continuity and fidelity are being deemphasized in favor of functionality. Much of restoration is now primarily geared towards repairing rather than (or in addition to) reversing harms (Light 2012, Sandler 2012a). Additionally, restoration is increasingly being framed through a relational/virtue ethics lens (Thompson and Bendik-Keymer 2012, Whyte and Cuomo 2016). Instead of focusing on winding back the clock, this sort of restoration aims to cultivate or revitalize reciprocal interspecies relationships and the virtues of openness and accommodation that go along with them; ecological healing can and, in many cases, should involve change (Plumwood 2002, Sandler 2012b, Kimmerer 2013). That being said, the role that historical fidelity ought to play in restoration—and conservation more broadly—is still very much up for debate (Light 2012, Sandler 2012a). Additionally, it seems as though for every attempt at restoration-as-healing there is a proposal to practice restoration-as-reversal by way of technology-driven interventions such as rewilding and de-extinction (Mitchell 2017, Sandler 2017).

Even when these ethical dimensions are reworked as outlined above, there is widespread recognition that environmental ethics/conservation understood only as preservation and restoration will not be enough to navigate the complex ethical terrain of climate change and, more broadly, the Anthropocene (e.g., Thompson and Bendik-Keymer 2012, Haraway 2015, Vogel 2015). As Light (2012, 120) suggests, "Restoration will neither damn us nor save us in the years to come but it will be part of a cluster of practices which could represent the best that we can do in an uncertain future." With the acknowledgement that at least some denizens/aspects of the past cannot survive the unfolding crisis, environmentalism has allowed mitigation and adaptation to make themselves at home within the project/paradigm of conservation. While

climate change mitigation is directed at softening the blow to "who we are at present, adaptation means adjusting our conception of who we are to appropriately fit the new global context" (Thompson and Bendik-Keymer 2012, 7). Understood to be decidedly lacking in the lifeways responsible for the Anthropocene, sustainability has become a central, albeit essentially contested, principle of environmentalism (Thompson 2010). And while to some adaptation may be regarded as surrender, Sandler (2012a, 77) warns, "Pushing back futilely, inefficiently, or dangerously against th[e] effects [of climate change], trying to remake things as they were or otherwise would have been (out of a sense of guilt, responsibility, restitution, historicity, or nostalgia) is trying to remake the world—trying (yet again) to adapt it to us, rather than us to it." Justice as well as ecology is integral to the theory and practice of climate change adaptation and sustainable living (Thompson and Bendik-Keymer 2012).

In this way, the notion that transformation may not only be tragically inevitable but in some ways desirable is slowly making itself more at home within mainstream environmentalism. Building upon the groundwork—if not always the texts—produced by scholars and activists whose transformative agendas relegated them to the discursive fringes (e.g., critics of environmental racism, decolonial advocates, ecofeminists), proponents of climate change adaptation can be found flirting with the idea of transformative environmental justice. There is a sense that humanity's relationship to the natural world has somehow gone horribly wrong—more wrong than anyone knew, surely—and change is now decidedly necessary. Even if our mitigation efforts are successful and we can pull the planet back from the brink, there are things that will need to change in order to prevent this cycle from repeating. There is growing recognition that environmentalism will have to get a handle not only on climate ethics but climate *justice*. Precisely which features of the world require an overhaul is hotly contested, but

the overall trend to situate environmental preservation, restoration, and mitigation alongside sustainable adaptation appears to be steadily growing.

## B. Critical Analysis

As previously quoted, Kareiva and Marvier (2012, 968)—alongside increasing numbers of environmentalists—contend that conservation efforts cannot rely solely upon the past for practical or theoretical guidance given the magnitude (i.e., scope and permanence) of anthropogenic environmental harms/wrongdoing. Instead, environmentalists should work towards a future that makes the best of a bad situation. It's okay to be nostalgic about the past (i.e., the Holocene), but we must also be realistic. This framing of environmental ethics in the time of climate change is somewhat at odds with approaches that emphasize sustainable adaptation. While both agree that the future *cannot* mirror the past and understand conservation as a cluster of strategies (not all of which prioritize historicity), the conviction that a great deal of change is not only inevitable but necessary to ensure a better future is not readily apparent in the nostalgic approach. Never a stranger to confounding contradictions (e.g., the wilderness ideal), environmental ethics is currently experiencing cognitive dissonance regarding the ways in which specific tools are conceptualized/employed versus the overall framing of the phenomenon for which these tools are being (re)developed, that is, "Anthropocenic" climate change. Environmentalism may be finding it progressively difficult to emphasize past-oriented strategies under the shadow of apocalypse, but its normative framework has been slower to follow suit. Transformative approaches to climate justice still face significant discursive barriers, including the understanding of environmentalism as a crisis discipline and the way in which the more recent crisis of climate change has been (de)contextualized. The future is a mess, but the past remains remarkably intact; an apt target for preservation if there ever was one.

Insofar as climate change has been located at the heart of the Anthropocene Epoch, the

two often bleed together conceptually, materially, and ethically. Therefore, I suggest that many

of the critiques levied at the Anthropocene can be similarly applied to mainstream climate

change discourse. One of the things that makes the concept of the Anthropocene so tempting is

how user friendly it is; instead of referring to various components separately—climate change,

biodiversity, pollution, etc.—, all of humanity's environmental sins get wrapped up into one tidy

bundle. Such convenience, however, comes at the cost of a totalizing analytical framework that

flattens out nuance and difference where they matter most. Such approaches are totalizing insofar

as their unifying narratives/subjectivities/ecologies/etc. produce harmful false homogenies rather

than the productive holism they (may) seek.

As critical Anthropocene scholars[15] have argued, no single Anthropos exists (Cuomo

2011, Gaard 2015, Haraway 2015). That climate change and other destructive phenomena are

anthropogenic does not mean that "humanity" is the responsible party. Furthermore,

vulnerability to and responsibility for global environmental injustices vary widely from

community to community, human or otherwise (Cuomo 2011, Lepori 2014). In fact,

disproportionate vulnerabilities and responsibilities are a defining feature of climate change on

the ground, one which works against the idea of there being *an* Anthropocene. When climate

change gets framed as a matter of Humans versus The Environment, important political

distinctions are lost, subtleties necessary for determining *how* global climate change came to be

and *who* ought to be doing *what* about it. In particular, the task of connecting specific

environmental harms/wrongdoing to other forms of social injustice is made especially

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[15] I want to acknowledge that critics of the Anthropocene have a tendency to fall prey to the same totalizing logics/impulses by proposing alternative names for the epoch (e.g., Plastocene, Cthulucene), thereby failing to heed critiques from Indigenous and decolonial scholars regarding the colonial aspects of the geologic timescale (Mitchell 2017, Davis and Todd 2017).

challenging when species identity trumps all others. I find this passage from Lepori (2014)

particularly helpful in linking the various threads of this critique together:

> "Through an all-encompassing rhetoric paired with a catastrophist imaginary, the Anthropocene pushes a new universal history and subject…Though this rhetoric is effective for drawing attention to the ecological crisis, raising the alarm over the state of the atmosphere and global biodiversity, the term is equally dangerous as a matter of social theory. By generalizing responsibility and guilt for our contemporary ecological disasters to the point that it encompasses the human species, the Anthropocene concept and discourse elide a history of asymmetrical political-economic relations…By furthering the Anthropocene discourse's silence regarding the political economy, this empty cosmopolitanism provides no ground for politics but rather removes it." (123-4)

The political limitations of Anthropocenic climate change discourse also stem from its

totalizing temporality. Poised as we are on this precipitous brink, time—geologic and

otherwise—is neatly parceled into that which came before climate change and whatever comes

next. While some environmentalists frame the climate crisis as a tragic apocalypse (i.e., one so

imminently catastrophic it is already well underway) about which there is little that can be done,

much of the mainstream discourse adopts a comic apocalyptic stance, maintaining that there is

much we can do to pull ourselves back from the brink even now (Garrard 2012). In either

scenario, a significant aspect of the tragedy of climate change is the temporal rupture it

promises/threatens, the unbridgeable schism between a world worth preserving and the world

that will/may be. Though increasingly beyond reach, this world bears strong resemblance to the

past around which environmental ethics oriented itself prior to climate change (Gaard 2015). The

future may be in flux, but climate change has yet to destabilize the obfuscating nostalgia that

environmentalism inherited from the wilderness ideal. However much these positive associations

have been eroded by the sprawling scope of an Anthropocene rooted more deeply in our species

history than previous understandings of human environmental wrongdoing allowed for, "the

past" still represents a better state of eco-social affairs than would/will be present in the post-climate change future for a long time, perhaps forever.

Unsurprisingly, the environmental futurities articulated by Anthropocenic climate change discourse are discouragingly limited. In the face of either tragic or comic apocalypse, the impetus for ethical action—i.e., what we ought to do about climate change—is tethered to our ability to prevent the end of the world, if not all climate related environmental harms. Not only do these narrow apocalyptic orientations mask the many worlds/lives/lifeways that may end even if The World as envisioned by mainstream environmentalists does not, they overlook or existentially minimize the endings that have already occurred, the brinks that others have been repeatedly pushed beyond (Mitchell 2017, Whyte 2018). When environmentalism beseeches us to pull back from the edge of disaster, it is to a world that many would prefer to leave behind, albeit by means other than global climate destabilization. Whereas the sharp break of apocalypse could represent an opportunity to explore futures not limited to/by the past, the post-climate change world is more often defined by its absence. And even then, precisely *who* (as opposed to what) will no longer be with us is rarely discussed, let alone what they may require at present and moving forward.

Thus, although mainstream environmentalism in the time of climate change has accepted that there is much of the past that cannot be mirrored in the future and, at times, understands adaptation as more than an unfortunate necessity, the overall temporal/normative orientation of environmental ethics remains structurally resistant to more radically transformative approaches. The possibilities created by a future in flux cannot be ethically explored until the environment(s) of the past have been rigorously contextualized within intersecting traditions of inter- and intra-species oppression. The absence of such analyses combined with the totalizing nature of

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Anthropocene discourse also make it difficult to grasp exactly what/whose worlds are ending

and, just as importantly, have already ended. The dead are ever present in the Anthropocene but

only in the abstract. Without a firm grasp on both the who and the how of climate change

causalities, environmentalism lacks the tools to discern what may be owed. It can only lament.

As the discourse is coming to realize, however, environmental ethics has many responsibilities

beyond preventing worlds from falling over the brink yet again. The pursuit of transformative

environmental justice is one. As I argue in the remainder of this chapter, attending to the dead

and the dying—as themselves and not simply as aspects of the past—is another.

## IV: Attending to the Dead (and Dying)

### A. Moving Closer

As I have alluded to, the dead and the dying have proliferated within environmental

discourse in the time of climate change. Though much of their increased presence can be

attributed to the issuance of warnings regarding what could/will happen without adequate climate

mitigation/adaptation, their inclusion goes beyond the instrumental. More often than not,

academic environmental philosophy regards death as a puzzle, having preoccupied itself with

questions like whether and how the loss of a species constitutes a harm or wrongdoing[16] or the

possibility of de-extinction. Outside of the academy, however, environmentalists have been more

inclined to seriously consider and attempt to answer questions of what is owed to those whose

deaths can be attributed to environmental injustice insofar as they are dead. This section provides

a brief, non-exhaustive—though hopefully generally representative—overview of recent

attempts to grapple with the death wrought by global climate change and related anthropogenic

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[16] While I am familiar with this literature (e.g., Delord 2007, Palmer 2009, Cafaro and Primack 2014), I am comfortable for the purposes of this project to assume that communities as well as individuals can be harmed by death, especially when the result of unjust ecologies. Furthermore, I do not limit myself to the framework of extinction when considering the loss of species from families, habitats, ecosystems, and lifeways.

environmental phenomena. Although certainly an improvement over the discourse's prior treatment (in all senses of the word) of the dead/dying, there remains significant room for growth.

Before I discuss where mainstream environmentalism in the time of climate change comes the closest to doing right by the dead and the dying, it must be noted that there have always been currents within environmental ethics whose frameworks have been more accommodating to those lost to environmental injustice. Here, I have in mind those movements or sub-literatures oriented around transformative agendas that either largely evaded or openly critiqued the pitfalls of past-oriented environmentalism and the wilderness ideal. Ecofeminism and deep ecology are two traditions that, while not without their fair share of problems, have long sought to destabilize the human/nature binary and situate environmental harms/wrongdoing within larger ethical/political contexts (e.g., Shiva 1989, Naess 1990, Plumwood 1993, Cuomo 1998, Haraway 2008). Advocates of environmental and decolonial justice have gone even further in advancing theories of and strategies for transformative, intersectional environmental politics (e.g., the Indigenous Environmental Network (founded 1990), Detroiters Working for Environmental Justice (founded 1994), Adamson et al. 2002, Whyte 2011, Kimmerer 2013). Historically, these are the environmentalisms that have been the most attentive to both those suffering/dying from injustice and the unjustly dead, as well as those to urge most vociferously for new ideologies and ecologies. Even if/when not (at least explicitly) developing specific strategies for achieving justice for the dead/dying, their baseline assumption—i.e., the imperative of socio-ecological transformation—disrupts past-oriented thinking/practices and, thereby, opens up the space for such work.

One consequence of global climate change has been that there are those among the environmentally privileged who are finding it increasingly difficult to ignore environmental casualties. Within popular contemporary environmentalism[17], amongst the best-known types of responses to the mounting death toll are extinction memorials. The proposed Mass Extinction Monitoring Observatory (MEMO) on the isle of Portland off the southern coast of England, for example, has been conceptualized as "a global beacon for biodiversity" with the goal of educating the public about species lost to and saved from extinction (MEMO Project 2018). To be built from local fossil-rich stone in the shape of a descending spiral shell, the monument will provide visual record of all known extinct species and sound a nine-ton bell every time another species goes extinct in the future. Similarly, "Remembrance Day for Lost Species" (November 30th) was inaugurated in 2011 as "a chance each year to explore the stories of species, cultures, lifeways and habitats driven extinct by unjust power structures and exploitation, past and ongoing" (Remembrance Day for Lost Species 2018). "Now is the time," their website implores, "to create new rituals for remembering and mourning those we have lost, and for celebrating and making commitments to those remaining." Both efforts highlight the ways in which the project of memorializing the dead is commonly linked to efforts to prevent further losses in the future through (more and less) transformative action.

*Calling Thunder: The Unsung History of New York* takes a more evocative approach to the losses of the past via an immersive audio/visual experience that offers a glimpse into "pre-colonial" New York City (Al-Ibrahim and McQuay 2019). Created through the Cornell Lab of Ornithology using the work of conservation ecologist Eric Sanderson, the ten-minute 3D video contrasts the sites and soundscapes of Manhattan circa 2017 with "Mannahatta" circa 1609.

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[17] It might just be more honest to call this what it is—white environmentalism.

Central Park, we are told, is but a "pale reminder" of what/who once thrived on the island Indeed, Sanderson (2009, xx) reports that "if Mannahatta existed today as it did then, it would be a national park—it would be the crowning glory of American national parks." Listeners/viewers of *Calling Thunder* learn, for example, the story of Collect Pond Park; once the site of a five-acre basin of freshwater, the pond was transformed by colonists' slaughterhouses and tanneries until it became so fetid it was deemed best buried (Al-Ibrahim and McQuay 2019). Today all that remains is a small reflecting pool. "But," through the project, "we listen. And we remember…the thrum of life in Mannahatta." And though much altered, we are told that the "green heart of New York still beats" even now. Cities too are ecosystems and "development doesn't have to mean desolation." Viewers/listeners are informed from the start that in 1609 the island was home to "one of the oldest Algonquin cultures in the Northeast—the Lenape—who saw themselves as of the land, but never the owners of it" (Al-Ibrahim and McQuay 2019). The implication is clear—Manhattan would do well to remember both who was lost to *and* what can be reclaimed (appropriated) from Mannahatta.[18]

Within environmental philosophy proper, considerations of memorializing the dead are largely overshadowed by the de-extinction debate. Playing to past-oriented discursive strengths, the discipline seems much more comfortable regarding extinction as an issue of restoration than of irreversible moral failure (Cohen 2014, Diehm 2015). The now notorious Pleistocene Park in Arctic Siberia is one such project to be dissected, scrutinized, and championed (Pleistocene Park Foundation 2018). Founded in 1996 by a Russian geophysicist, the park's mission is to restore the Mammoth Steppe ecosystem, mammoths (and other extinct species) included (Anderson 2017). Indeed "resurrecting" the woolly mammoth, or something like them, is a goal currently

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[18] "Reclaiming" Lenape ecological philosophies, however, may prove significantly more complex than scavenging old barn timbers.

shared by many scientists and environmentalists alike (Piotrowska 2018, Browning 2019).

Though such proposals have been met with outcries of skepticism and/or outrage, I would

suggest that de-extinction—far from being beyond the pale—makes perfect sense within a past-

oriented ethical/environmental paradigm. With it we see the (un)natural progression of

restoration-as-reversal to keep pace with technology and fulfill its necromantic destiny in the

Anthropocene.

When the dead are considered as more than potential un-dead, it is the affective

dimensions of the "human" experience of extinction and loss that take center stage. The most

common culprits—anxiety, fear, guilt, and grief, or we might say "guilty grief" given the

tendency to center the emotions of those most responsible for climate injustice (e.g., Asma 2010,

Fredericks 2014). Though some are honest about tending primarily to the affective dimensions of

environmental privilege, elsewhere frequent slippage occurs between guilty grief and "the grief

we all feel in the face of such tragedy." Likewise—and non-coincidentally—there is a dearth of

accounts of grieving for specific or intimately familiar ecological partners. Instead the

experience of loss is considered on large scale, almost existential terms, the best example being

the emotional nexus of mass extinction. What remains opaque—frustratingly so considering

whose feelings are being considered and the target audience—is what ought to be done with,

through, by way of, or in the wake of these powerful emotions.

## B. Going Further

The necromantic project of de-extinction aside, I would argue that all such attempts at

and analyses of memorializing and mourning have ethical and political merits in the time of

climate change. This does not mean that the criticism directed at these analyses and practices can

be ignored. Extinction takes up an inordinate amount of discursive space and is often lifted from

the sciences without sufficient conceptual and normative scrutiny.  The grief of the guilty can be immobilizing if not partnered with other forms of labor, emotional and otherwise. And the Anthropocenic universality that creeps into the literatures on extinction, affect, and memorials obscures responsibility as well as the experiences and contributions of non-/less environmentally privileged communities. Yet even were such problems resolved, symbolic memorials and private affective experiences are both practically and theoretically insufficient for attending to what is owed to the dead and the dying of global climate change.

As was previously noted, the emotions most commonly addressed in the literature on affect are those of the environmentally privileged. Even absent totalizing Anthropocenic framing, any discourse concerning the affective dimensions of climate change will be incomplete without making space for the emotions of those—human and nonhuman—who lack such privilege. And though I certainly do not wish to imply that the emotional labor of mourning one's dead is not important ethical work, I would argue that the environmentally privileged working through their (our) guilty grief does not satisfy their obligations to the dead and dying. Nor, I would suggest, does it legitimately qualify as mourning given (i) that the guilt far outshines the grief and, more importantly, (ii) *who* (besides ourselves) we suppose ourselves qualified to grieve for.[19] Such labor is unfortunately (practically) necessary for the pursuit of environmental justice, but—at most—it lays the groundwork for doing right by the dead, dying, AND the living.

Memorializing projects are better—to varying degrees—at creating linkages between the moral failure of climate change and ethical action. By aiming to prevent further losses, projects like the MEMO and Remembrance Day parlay memorializing the dead into support for climate

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[19] And explore in more detail in Chapter 3.

mitigation, sustainable adaptation, and, at times, transformative environmental justice. The action/activism being motivated here, however, is directed almost entirely at building a better future for the living. Though I fully embrace (as I will discuss shortly) the entanglement of environmental justice for the dead and the living, I am wary of collapsing our political and ethical obligations to the unjustly dead into the work of envisioning and manifesting emancipatory futurities. As with those who *survive* injustice, our obligations to the unjustly dead go beyond ensuring that others do not suffer the same fate. Any good transformative approach must work to both preempt and redress violence and oppression (Boesten and Wilding 2015, Walker 2015). As discussed at the very start of this chapter, death dissolves neither our relationships with nor our obligations to the dead themselves.

In some ways, this kind of direct ethical/political regard for the dead is supported by the literatures on reparations and, more broadly, intergenerational justice. Calls for reparations (e.g., for slavery) take seriously the possibility that something can/must be done to right/mitigate past wrongs even if those who suffered them are no longer alive (e.g., Zack 2003, Miller and Kumar 2007). Indeed, this discourse helps to make salient and challenge the distinction between the unjustly dead and the dead who never saw justice in life but did not perish (directly) from injustice, a distinction of considerable importance for a phenomenon as diffuse and complex as global climate change. The bulk of reparations work, however, though grounded in past injustices (whose effects are still felt in the present), is largely directed at the living. Indeed, intergenerational justice in general tends to skew forward, with climate justice almost entirely focused on future generations, insofar as it is manifests intergenerationally (e.g., Dobson 1999, Gosseries and Meyer 2009, Gardiner 2014). And while I am grateful for the ways in which environmentalism's increasingly frantic preoccupation with our obligations to future generations

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has created more space for temporal orientations that allow ethics/justice to operate beyond a fairly narrow time slice, I am wary of how intergenerational justice in this context so often gets (i) framed unidirectionally and/or (ii) discussed in terms of distributive justice and non-identity problems (e.g., Meyer 2015).

Nor are these the politics that the (more fruitful) case studies considered above concern themselves with. The curators of these and other memorials clearly believe that extinct species ought not to be forgotten both for their own sake and that of others. However, in their current forms—e.g., remote monuments, soundscapes, and annual days of remembrance commemorated through art and song—, the work undertaken on behalf of the dead, however moving, is largely symbolic. Relatedly, what gets remembered is often incomplete, the story fragmented. In *Calling Thunder*, for example, we do not hear (from) or see the Lenape, even though their settlements and ecological practices are noted verbally by the narrator multiple times along the journey (Al-Ibrahim and McQuay 2019). And while we hear some of the (nonhuman) voices present at Collect Pond in 1609, the audio leaps forward in time to 2017 from there. Any sounds of slaughter and displacement in the interim are literally muted. Such memorials lack the substance and specificity required of theorizing and practicing environmental conservation, restoration, adaptation, etc. Perhaps this and other such oversights should not be surprising given that Anthropocenic climate change discourse (i) denies adequate substance and specificity to the living and (ii) understands the dead as entirely lost to the past. The memorials generated within mainstream environmentalism by the environmentally privileged may be a decent start towards serving the dead in the present/future—and, indeed, are far more developed than corollary treatments within the environmental ethics literature—but a more robust approach is sorely needed. With the ethical dimensions/projects of environmental palliation and remembrance I

hope to advance scaffolding—and, in later chapters, substance and detailed examples—for such an approach to climate justice.

Given the frequency with which climate change is linked to mass suffering and extinction, it is surprising that the dying are largely absent from conversations regarding what ought to be done for those who will not survive global climate change. Even if the dead are now occasionally being considered within popular environmentalism as more than "lost causes," the dying, it would seem, have to wait for death to issue ethical and political demands. Under a past-oriented approach, there are ample resources to draw upon to claim that restoration is necessary when those failing to thrive can be aided (e.g., Light 2012, Sandler 2012a). Sometimes they are even couched in terms of justice (e.g., Dorsey 2009, Palomar 2010). For those who are sure to die unjustly despite the best possible restorative or adaptive efforts, however, environmentalism, environmental ethics included, appears to be occupying a long silence as innumerable clocks wind down. At times, mourning even seems to preempt mortality, e.g., as we see with polar bears. And while grieving someone's loss can certainly begin prior their death, when unaccompanied by efforts to attend to their needs at the end of life, mourning does not fulfill our immediate obligations to the dying. Rather, as with the suffering beneficiaries of adaptive/transformative justice, the dying deserve respite and support even if they cannot be as they were before. Creating the structural, relational, and tangible conditions for good (or, at least, better) deaths/dying must be as much a part of climate justice as those required for good lives/living.

And though, on the surface, environmental ethics for the dead—especially the idea that our obligations, like our ecological partnerships, to those who suffer environmental injustice do not cease with death—may seem more controversial than palliation for the dying, the importance

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of attending to the dead of "the Anthropocene" has received a decent (if modest) amount of popular and academic uptake.[20] But if symbolic memorials are insufficient, what do we owe the unjustly dead? I believe that the creators of Remembrance Day for Lost Species have promising rhetoric and intentions if an incomplete practice. Here remembrance is public ritual involving both the recognition of injustice and the commitment to resisting those same unjust power structures in the future.  And though there is a definite emphasis on the imperative of change, the unspoken assumption that being kept alive in memory serves as (partial) justice for the dead rings clear. And, yet, Remembrance Day is as isolated temporally as MEMO is geographically. Neither memorial qualifies as active, ongoing remembrance. Like palliation, remembrance is a situated, expert communal practice. It is a difficult task to remember someone if you didn't know them in life. You might mourn that you never got to know the deceased as well as you liked— which, for better or worse, may indeed capture a large portion of the environmentally privileged's grief—but this is an affective orientation directed at the mourner, not the mourned. Without expert cooperation and guidance, "memory" is at best memorial. Absent the political context consciously centered by the Remembrance Day but conspicuously absent from MEMO and *Calling Thunder*, remembrance is untethered from the conditions that make it an ethical imperative. Reduced to affect, it is an ethic without teeth. If the living victims of climate injustice should not settle for our tears, why should the dead?

I want to make explicitly clear that neither remembrance nor palliation is reserved for those (soon to be) extinct. In many circumstances, those for whom remembrance is practiced may not be dead but lost just as irrevocably to certain ecosystems, communities, and peoples. Indeed, global climate change seems likely to result in at least as many such losses as

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[20] As evidenced, in part, by the case studies discussed in this section.

extinctions. Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013, 171) writes of sugar maples, "It's a running threat on the left and the right: 'If things don't change, I'm moving to Canada.' It looks like the maples will have to do just that…Imagine New England without maples. Unthinkable. A brown Fall instead of hills afire. Sugar houses boarded up. No more fragrant clouds of steam. Would we even recognize our homes? Is that a heartbreak we can bear?" Furthermore, as Kimmerer eloquently demonstrates, the loss of organisms to climate change can encompass more than the death of individuals or species. For this reason and others more fully discussed in Chapter 3, I do not wish to prematurely delimit or, ultimately, police who/what can be considered among the dying and the dead. Rather than put forth strict, predetermined criteria, I rely on my expert interlocuters to educate me about their dead, the who and the how. This is a context-driven and ground-up approach, the methodology of which is fleshed out in Chapter 2 and employed in Chapter 3.

In addition to being what is owed to the dead and the dying, palliation and remembrance are essential components and companions of transformative environmental justice in the time of climate change. Pursuing these projects will require many among us to rework our relationships to nonhumans, the environment, and each other. And though public recognition of the tragedy and injustice may indeed be very effective at sparking people's desire for change but serving as a catalyst for action is not the same as pursuing transformation with particular deaths in mind. To be clear, palliation and remembrance are not ethics that incidentally lead to environmental transformation or can be theorized or practiced in isolation from justice for the living. Though ensuring that the living do not suffer the same injustices as the dead is insufficient by itself to satisfy our obligations to the latter, caring for the living in this way is part of how we do right by the dead. Likewise, attending to our relationships with the living requires maintaining

relationships with their/our dead. Being in ethical and political partnership with ecological entities means accepting responsibility for our partners prior to their births and long after their deaths. In this way, transformative climate justice practiced in tandem with palliation and remembrance disrupts the backwards, linear temporality that has held environmentalism in thrall for so long.

## V. Conclusion

The intention of this chapter has been to highlight the problem that drives my project. I have identified the absence/underdevelopment of practical and conceptual tools for attending to the dead and the dying of environmental injustice as a significant lacuna in the literature and larger environmental discourse. Inextricably linked to this oversight is the difficulty with which transformative environmental politics have had taking root within and receiving uptake from mainstream environmental and, now, climate ethics. The resistance/inability to seriously grapple with irreversible ecological moral failures stems from and feeds the discourse's temporal/normative orientation towards a carefully constructed past. And though environmentalism's past-orientation has been challenged by its own understanding of Anthropocenic climate change, it persists through the discourse's particular apocalyptic framing(s) and sense of what makes the phenomenon tragic/unjust.

The advent of global climate change emphasizes the impossibility for environmental ethics to prioritize the past, concern itself only with the living, and remain/become practically and theoretically salient. Thus, I undertake this project to aid in reorienting and expanding the scope of environmental ethics. I do so in the hope that the unavoidable moral failures of global climate change can be ameliorated as much as possible without enacting further violence upon vulnerable peoples, human or otherwise, living or dead. Attending to the dead and dying may

only be two facets of climate and environmental justice, but learning how to theorize, practice, and/or support palliation and remembrance will go a long way towards underwriting liberatory interspecies politics for environmental transformation.

# CHAPTER TWO

## (Post)apocalypse When and How:

## Narrative Environmental Ethics and Practice at the Crux

### I. Introduction

If, as I argue in the previous chapter, environmental ethics has neglected the dead and the dying of climate change and in general, to whom then do we turn for insights on how to approach the theory and practice of palliation and remembrance? When the mainstream discourse proves unfruitful, we must forage elsewhere. In this project, I plan to draw upon three different sorts of resources—narratives, practices, and, when necessary, scholarship—that (i) avoid past-oriented and Anthropocenic thinking and (ii) attend to both the transformative demands and the dead/dying of climate change. My proposed methodology involves analyzing the themes, political commitments, and contexts of fictional and lived stories—aided when necessary by supplementary scholarship—in order to distill and interweave their ethical claims. The ultimate goal of this distillation and weaving is not to purify but to draw out and commune the dimensions of environmental palliation and remembrance.

My work with fictional narratives relies upon the claim that stories are already involved in the project of ethics. They are adept at making ethical arguments, especially about those things that are difficult to articulate any other way. When they are not being used to perpetuate injustice, narratives have enormous subversive and liberatory capacities. Science fiction in particular has a particular knack for and track record of describing, critiquing, and warning of oppressive practices, ideologies, structures, etc., as well as articulating ethical/political alternatives to them. Moreover, the genre has been increasingly attentive to environmental

dimensions in ways that have greatly enriched the discourse of the environmental humanities. Despite pitfalls aplenty, the subgenre of (post)apocalyptic science fiction has much to offer the underdeveloped dimensions of environmental ethics in the time of climate change. Specifically, Indigenous/decolonial, Afrofuturist, and/or feminist narratives manage to employ the trope while both avoiding and resisting past-oriented and Anthropocenic thinking.

It would be hubristic and theoretically inconsistent, however, to presume to distill ethical claims from the *descriptive* genre of science fiction regarding those theories/practices that environmental ethics has neglected without engaging the work of actual practitioners. These narratives would not be able to describe—as opposed to prescribe or predict—remembrance and palliation, for example, if there were no one practicing some form of them in reality. Thus, when relying upon science fiction, any exploration of environmental ethics' underdeveloped dimensions must attend to lived practices in order to be complete. For this reason, my approach will be to interweave the contributions of narratives and practitioners. It must be acknowledged, however, that my engagement with such practitioners will be primarily through stories of their work and not the practitioners/practices themselves. In some cases this will be the most appropriate course of action since I am not qualified to practice certain instantiations of remembrance and palliation. Other times, this lack of engagement constitutes an epistemic and ethical limitation of my methodology. As a result, the conclusions I draw from these practices must be both provisional and highly responsive to critiques from their practitioners.

## II. WHAT—Overview of Contributions from Different Sources

### A. Fictional Narratives

The primary texts I work with in this project are narratives that fall within the genre(s) of science fiction fantasy. In particular, I rely upon what I refer to collectively as (post)apocalyptic

Indigenous, Afrofuturist, and/or feminist science fiction fantasy. Though there has been an unfortunate tendency for more recent science fiction—e.g., "cli-fi"—to portray climate change and other environmental quandaries/injustices in ways that dovetail well with mainstream environmental(ism) ethics, other sorts of science fiction (fantasy) narratives both avoid and resist these ideologies and ethics. Instead of reproducing past-oriented ethics/theory, these texts successfully identify, critique, and imagine/theorize alternatives to the forms of life, institutions, ideologies, structures, etc. responsible for global climate change and intersecting (environmental and non-environmental) injustices. Some narratives specifically highlight the tragedy/injustice of environmental destruction in particular (e.g., Le Guin 1976, Hall 2008, Novik 2015, Hurley 2017). Others offer a wider perspective on environmental crisis, framing it as one thread in a complex tapestry of injustice (e.g., Silko 1977, Butler 1993, Hand 1993, Atwood 2003-2013, Bacigalupi 2009, Jemisin 2015-2017). Whether framed broadly or narrowly (but intersectionally), environmental degradation and collapse are depicted in these science fiction fantasy narratives to great effect/affect *without* reproducing past-oriented or Anthropocenic politics.

Due, in part, to their politically rich (post)apocalyptic framing, these narratives also contend with the dead and dying in ways that neither mainstream (i) science fiction fantasy nor (ii) environmental(ism) ethics has been doing. Generally constructed around the stories of marginalized protagonists and communities, these texts build fantastical worlds that are acutely attentive to the rents left by the unjustly dead and what ought to be done for them (e.g., Hopkinson 1998, Dillon 2012, Jemisin 2015-2017, Shawl 2016). Likewise the injustice and suffering experienced by those in the present—including that of the dying—is thoughtfully highlighted for the purposes of critique and to describe/imagine alternatives (e.g., Le Guin 1976,

Hopkinson 2000, Winterson 2007, Bacigalupi 2009). The characters in these stories are also frequently forced to confront and prepare for future losses of persons and forms of life (e.g., Butler 1993, Jemisin 2015-2017). In fact, attending to the dead/dying along these three axes is often framed as three "sides" of the same holistic ethic. In this way, the narratives' exploration of and commentary on the politics of oppression, loss, death, and dying defy linear temporality (e.g., Silko 1977, Okorafor-Mbachu 2010, Winterson 2007).

## B. Lived Practices

For reasons that I outline in Part III and defend in Part IV, my project would be methodologically and politically unfeasible if it made no attempt to draw upon lived practices in addition to science fiction fantasy narratives that offer descriptions of palliation and remembrance. The most robust examples can be found in accounts of the land-based knowing/memory/ethics in the nonfictional writings of Indigenous and Black feminist scholars and activists. Winona LaDuke (2016), for example, reflects on the necessity of grieving for the death of a river. Likewise, Robin Kimmerer (2013) weaves memory into practices of care and reciprocity for/with the nonhuman world. Salmon is even framed as "the hub of Salish memory" by Lee Maracle (2015) in her analysis of the Tribe's and fish's struggles under settler colonialism. Further north up the coast, Inupiaq communities have been working to maintain and reimagine their relationships with bowhead whales through adaptive drumming practices as climate change wreaks havoc on sea ice and whale migration patterns (Sakakibara 2009). Along the Atlantic seaboard, Black communities are pursuing agriculture, storytelling, root-work, and sites of counter memory as ways of grappling with the history/legacy of slavery while simultaneously preparing for storms surges and rising sea levels (Alderman 2010, Butler 2019). In all of these projects, the work of remembering the dead and tending to the dying is integral to

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what it means to grapple with the legacy and ongoing reality of racialized and colonial environmental injustice. Perhaps the closest I come to engaging lived practices from mainstream environmental discourse is through the work of feminist settler writer and activist Terry Tempest Williams, who reflects long on death, dying, and environmental injustice in the American Southwest. Additionally, I draw upon the whale-mother Tahlequah's very public remembrance of her calf, in part, as interpreted and popularized by conservation biologists. Overall, what these practices help illustrate is that, whether or not the precise language of palliation and remembrance are at play, communities are actively attending to the dead and dying of climate change in ways that go far beyond the past-oriented, Anthropocenic, and even the current iterations of transformative approaches to environmental(ism) ethics.

### C. Traditional Scholarship

Though my project focuses primarily on narratives and (stories of) lived practices, I do weave traditional scholarship into my analysis.[21] Some of these texts/authors are located at the fringes of environmental ethics and could be roughly grouped under three headings: ecofeminists (e.g., Plumwood 1993, Cuomo 1998, Gaard 2015), environmental justice (e.g., Adamson, Evans, and Stein 2002), critical Anthropocene and extinction studies (e.g., Mitchell 2017, Yusoff 2018), and Indigenous environmental philosophy (e.g., Kimmerer 2013, Whyte 2018). Those within environmental ethics who come closest to doing work in the ballpark of palliation and remembrance are the ones who have paid the closest attention to the violent/unjust forms of life responsible for the environmental/interspecies injustices of the past/present and who have long— i.e., since before global climate change took center stage—oriented environmental/interspecies ethics around transformative ideologies, aspirations, and practices (e.g., Shiva 1989, Plumwood

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[21] Especially in this chapter for laying down my methodological framework.

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1993, Cuomo 1998). Likewise, there are aspects of eco-centric thinking (e.g., Naess 2010) that may bolster or, at least, dialogically legitimize my claim that the nonhuman dead and dying of climate change are non-instrumentally owed something. In addition to making use of such work to explore palliation and remembrance, I plan to employ these theories to strengthen my account of what an environmental ethics oriented around transformation—both tragic and/or liberatory— should and should not be. As was discussed in Chapter 1, however, with the exception of some of Indigenous philosophy and, more recently, critical Anthropocene and extinction studies, ethics for the dead and the dying of environmental injustice are not explicitly attended to even at the fringes of environmental(ism) ethics.

Outside of environmental ethics, I draw upon scholarly literature to (i) provide context for the narratives/practices I engage with and (ii) theorize death and dying both directly and, less directly, in relation to transformative justice. For context (of various sorts) I rely primarily upon decolonial and Indigenous philosophy (e.g., Tuck and Yang 2012, Aluli-Meyer 2013, Whyte 2018), Black feminist philosophy (e.g., Lorde 1984, Hartman 2007), ecocriticism (e.g., Otto 2012, Adamson 2014, Garrard 2014, Alaimo 2016) and narrative ethics (e.g., Nussbaum 1995, Lindemann 2001, Le Guin 2004). While Black feminism and Indigenous philosophy help me to discern the politics of the particular narratives and practices, ecocriticism and narrative ethics aid in my consideration of the kinds of moral and political work narratives (broadly speaking) and science fiction (in particular) are capable of. With regards to (ii), I rely (again) on Black feminist and Indigenous thought in addition to scholarship in transformative justice (e.g., MacMahon 2014, Boesten and Wilding 2015, Walker 2015, Mendez 2016), feminist animal studies (e.g., Haraway 2008, Rudy 2013, Gruen 2015), queer theory (e.g., Cvetkovich 2003, Clark and Yusoff 2018), and feminist bioethics (e.g., Lindemann 2014). Of these, the work within queer theory,

Black feminism, and Indigenous philosophy deals most explicitly with the dead/dying, while the others tend to emphasize transformation, flourishing, and care of/within oppressive forms of life; and only in the latter is nonhuman or interspecies loss considered with any regularity. All that being said, I treat these traditional scholarly texts as supplementary in the particular ways detailed in Part III and for reasons explored in Part IV.

## III. HOW—Description of the Methodology

### A. Calling Upon Science Fiction Fantasy

The inspiration for this project came from my dealings—as a reader, viewer, and writer—with science fiction fantasy, and it is these narratives that provide the focal point of my methodology. Both in general and specifically with regards to environmental(ism) ethics in the time of global climate change, I regard the narrative texts I engage with as (a) sources of descriptive truths, (b) warnings, (c) societal critiques, and (d) sources of ethical/political theory that put forth arguments for (i) how to regard the past, (ii) what is and ought to be done in the present, and (iii) how to (re)imagine the shape of future worlds. Though (d) very much depends upon (a)-(c), it is the content of these narratives' subversive and sustaining (re)imaginative theories that I ultimately plan to curate, interweave, and mobilize towards transformative climate justice.

With the aim of cutting through this rather dense philosopher's jargon, I employ Hilde Lindemann's (2001) four questions for narrative ethicists to break down and partially reframe my methodological approach. Lindemann first asks—*what* is done with the story? This question corresponds with what she calls the "narrative act" (Lindemann 2001, 37). In this project, what I *do* with stories is read/view them. As I read/view narratives I keep track of certain themes, both those that I determine ahead of time (e.g., memory, affect, oppression, futurity, apocalypse,

community/ecology, death/dying) as well as those that may emerge along the way. Also, as I read/view, I assess and take notes on texts' political commitments and dynamics. This work continues well after "The End" and is invaluably supplemented by (a) discussions with others (e.g., friends, colleagues, family, etc.) and (b) research as to (i) different expert interpretations and (ii) the contexts out of which these emerge and to which/whom they are directed. Finally, I attempt to distill from what I have gathered (some of) the ethical arguments and theories articulated in and by these narratives.

The second question Lindemann poses to narrative ethicists—with *what kind* of story is this done?—corresponds to the genre. The "genre" of texts I engage with in this project are (post)apocalyptic Indigenous, Afrofuturist, and/or feminist science fiction fantasy. I do, at times, briefly consider other kinds of science fiction fantasy narratives but not in great depth and only for contrast. Thirdly, Lindemann inquires after the "narrative agent" by asking—*who* does something with the story? Here, the narrative agent is the researcher (i.e., me) and her close intellectual interlocutors. Lastly, Lindemann wants to know—*why* is this done? Or, in other words, what is the "moral purpose" of the narrative act? Narrowly construed, the purpose of engaging with these narratives in the ways that I do is, ultimately, to develop an account of environmental palliation and remembrance. More broadly, I intend my work to contribute to the project of environmental ethics/justice within and beyond academia. Before moving on, however, I want to acknowledge that this narrative methodology has developed organically over time. What this means is that my approach was conceived of partially in retrospect and has been (and continues to be) revised frequently as I go along to best suit the ends to which the texts and I work.

## B. Engaging with Lived Practices

If there is a "genre" of lived practices that I consider in this project it would be those that grow out of and in response to the same or kindred contexts/injustices explored by the fictional narratives I rely upon. In large part, the ways in which I propose to engage with these practices is also a methodology of reading/listening to stories in order to distill their ethical claims with regards to certain aspects of environmental ethics/justice in the time of climate change. In other words, it is beyond the scope of this project for me to literally engage with these practices—or, at least, those it would be possible and appropriate for me to participate in—and their practitioners. While I *did* craft my accounts of palliation and remembrance ethics while (in residence) researching how my family's farm serves as a problematic nexus of land-based memory, my own familial practices for attending to the dead/dying are not a proxy for the others I consider. Thus, I will need to rely upon others' accounts of the lived practices that parallel those described and imagined in the fictional narratives I consider. Whenever possible these will be firsthand accounts from the individuals and communities involved.

As in my methodology for engaging with fictional narratives, researching these lived practices involves keeping track of thematic elements and political commitments/dynamics. Likewise, special attention will be paid to contextualizing these practices. In addition to discussing these "case studies" with others in my communities, this will mean relying heavily upon outside scholarship each step of the way. Even by supplementing my knowledge thusly, it must be acknowledged that with regards to some of these communities/practitioners I am an outsider and, therefore, epistemically deficient when it comes to grasping the ethical claims/arguments expressed in conjunction with and through these practices. Thus, I undertake

this work with the understanding that any conclusions I draw are provisional and must be highly responsive to feedback from those actually engaged in this work.

### C. Curating Supplementary/Complementary Resources

I call upon fictional narratives and (the stories of) lived practices in conjunction with each other for support, contrast, and context. Narratives and lived practices support each other when they describe or (re)imagine environmental ethics for the dead/dying in ways that dovetail or are complementary. Conversely, they contrast each other when their approaches to attending to the dying/dead diverge or create friction. And insofar as they grow out of and respond to the same or overlapping environmental injustices, both the fictional narratives and lived practices I call upon provide helpful context for the other.

As articulated separately in subsections III.A and III.B, I engage with both fictional narratives and lived practices alongside more traditional forms of scholarship and theorizing. Integrating those theoretical resources—described in detail in subsection II.C—is done for the primary purposes of (i) helping to bridge narratives and practices, (ii) assessing the political commitments/dynamics of both, and (iii) providing necessary context for both. Importantly, though these scholarly texts also assist with the distillation and interweaving of ethical claims/arguments, it is vital that both stories and practices—as my primary texts—be allowed to speak for themselves rather than be extracted and molded to fit a predetermined theory. As supplementary or secondary texts, the analytical contributions of these more traditional scholarly sources—much like the informal dialogue I have with friends and colleagues—may not always rise to level of citations, but their influence is assuredly felt.

### D. Overview

Overall, my methodological approach consists of analyzing the themes, politics, and contexts of carefully chosen fictional narratives and lived practices—supplemented when necessary with traditional scholarship—in order to distill and interweave a subset of their ethical claims/arguments regarding the dead and dying. This is done with the end goal of articulating dimensions of environmental ethics not represented in the mainstream discourse in a way that is, perhaps, more readily accessible and digestible to environmental(ists) ethicists than the stories and practices themselves.

## IV. WHY—Defense of the Methodology

### A. Why These Narratives (in this way)?

> *"Fairy tales are more than true:*
> *not because they tell us that dragons exist,*
> *but because they tell us that dragons can be beaten."*
> *--G.K. Chesterton*

#### i. Introduction

In this section I offer justification for why I have chosen to engage such a narrow range of narratives—(post)apocalyptic Indigenous/decolonial, Afrofuturist, and/or feminist science fiction fantasy—and for how I propose to do so. At the heart of this defense is the claim that these narratives make ethical judgements/arguments as strongly and readily, though by significantly different means, as traditional ethical theorizing. Specifically, such stories do theoretical work of the sort that is indispensable for grappling with the ethics/politics of climate change past, present, and future. Texts in this sub-genre derive this capacity from their (at times unparalleled) ability to describe, critique, and warn of the potential consequences of oppressive practices, ideologies, structures, and so forth. To fully grasp these descriptions, critiques, and warnings, however, the narrative agent (in this case, me) needs to develop a rich understanding

of the feelings, themes, political dynamics, and contexts evoked by, explored in, and anchoring the narratives in question. Coming to such an understanding often requires supplementary research and dialogue with friends and colleagues. Like the narratives themselves, this methodology must be firmly rooted in context and community.

I begin by zooming out so as to consider how narratives participate in the study/practice of ethics. From there I hone in to examine the particular strengths of science fiction narratives both for ethics in general and for environmental ethics in particular. Narrowing the focus even more, I review the perils and, ultimately, the potential merits of (post)apocalyptic narratives for developing non-past-oriented environmental ethics in the time of climate change. These potential merits, however, are best borne out by (post)apocalyptic narratives with a particularly firm grasp on the shape/scope of environmental injustice past, present, and future, that is, by Indigenous/decolonial, Afrofuturist, and/or feminist science fiction fantasy. And, so, we arrive at the crux of the matter—why *these* narratives in particular. The section concludes with an overview of those "how" questions considered along the way as well as an explicit defense of any methodological details not previously addressed.

### ii. Why involve narratives in ethics?

Before any discussion of how certain narratives do specific kinds of ethical work, I want to be as transparent as possible about what I understand narratives to be. Roughly speaking, I take narratives to be stories, a way of arranging ideas, feelings, inventions, experiences, events, etc. in relation to each other in order to make sense of/out of them, both for ourselves and with others. Stories are in the business of saying something about how things fit together. They come in many forms and work towards innumerable ends. In fact, the "narrative act" has attracted much scholarly attention as a means of expression, mode of communication, psychological

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orientation, and much else besides (Kearney 2002, Ryan 2004, Phelan 2007). Narratologists have

long tried to pin down what makes a narrative a narrative, at times pulling apart form (syuzhet)

and content (fabula) in order to better understand the former (Propp 1968, Ryan 2004). In this

project, however, I am less concerned with pinning down narrative structure in general than with

exploring the qualities/capacities of particular narrative forms and the content they are able to

express by way of said form.[22] In other words, I am interested in what/how certain stories fit

things together and what they say as a result.

Much of the narrative content discussed in this section is what nowadays gets called

'fiction.' Whether narratives are fictional is a separate matter from whether they are true or, at

least, contain/express truths (Kearney 2002, Le Guin 2004). Ursula Le Guin (2004, 137) offers,

"A real novel, an entirely fictive and imaginative tale, can contain vast amounts of fact without

being any less fictional for it."[23] Borrowing Gary Snyder's image of fiction writing as

composting, she elaborates:

> Stuff goes into the writer, a whole lot of stuff not notes in a notebook but everything
> seen and heard and felt all day every day, a lot of garbage, leftovers, dead leaves,
> eyes of potatoes, artichoke stems, forests, streets, rooms in slums, mountain ranges,
> voices, screams, dreams, whispers, smells, blows, eyes, gaits, gestures, the touch of
> a hand, a whistle in the night, the slant of light on the wall of a child's room, a fin
> in a waste of waters. All of this stuff goes down into the novelist's personal compost
> bin, where it combines, recombines, changes; gets dark, mulchy, fertile, turns into
> ground. A seed falls into it, the ground nourishes the seed with the richness that
> went into it, and something grows. But what grows isn't an artichoke stem and a
> potato eye and a gesture. It's a new thing, a new whole. It's *made up*. (136)

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[22] And much like the many contemporary narratologists, I would resist the prioritization of form over content and
the idea that the two can be effectively teased apart for our consideration (Lindemann Nelson 1997, Ryan 2004).
[23] Le Guin (1976, xiii) also brilliantly observes, "Fiction writers, at least in their braver moments, do desire the truth:
to know it, speak it, serve it. But they go about it in a peculiar and devious way, which consists in inventing persons,
places, and events which never did and never will exist or occur, and telling about these fictions in detail and at
length with a great deal of emotion, and then when they are done writing down this pack of lies, they say, There!
That's the truth!"

The distinction between nonfiction and fiction concerns not the production of truth/fact on the one hand versus falsity/fabrication on the other but rather the way in which the two sorts of narratives arrive at them. Putting aside (for the moment) exactly how fictional stories speak truth, I want to keep sight of the nonsynonymy of 'nonfiction' and 'true'/'factual' with regards to narratives. For while I concern myself in this section primarily with fantastical tales, I do not give up on veracity—ethical or otherwise—by focusing on fictional narratives. Being "made up" does not necessarily equate something with fake news.

Fictional or not, when it comes to ethics, why bother with narratives at all? For one thing, narratives are already involved in the project of ethics—i.e., the work of critically engaging with and puzzling through the realities and possibilities of living with others towards the goal of doing so well/better—on a discursive level. That is, there is professional precedent—historical and, to a lesser extent, contemporary—for their inclusion. Philosophers from Bennett (1974) to Butler (2000) to Gardiner (2013) have engaged narratives texts in their work. Select literary works have even been regarded as philosophical texts in their own right. Examples such as *Candide* (Voltaire 1759), *Crime and Punishment* (Dostoyevsky 1866), *No Exit* (Sarte 1948), and *Atlas Shrugged* (Rand 1957) spring readily to mind. Many an ethicist has even opted to lead with a story before transitioning into more traditional prose (e.g., Norcross 2004, Lindemann 2014).[24] Others weave narratives directly into their writing in ways that register more or less transparently. The use of thought experiments is a particularly popular narrative technique that flies largely under the radar due, perhaps, to its perceived realism and scientific flavor (e.g., Thomson 1971, Parfit 1984). This method allows ethical theorists to tell each other stories without relying upon the wooly words of novelists, playwrights, filmmakers, etc. In fact, beyond the epigraph, straightforwardly

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[24] As I do in Chapters 1 and 3.

fictional narratives have had an increasingly hard time feeling at home in philosophy wherever the quest for clarity meets the renewed desire to see philosophy live up to her potential as the queen of the sciences.

It is primarily to the wooly, winding wor(l)ds of fiction, however, that I turn to explore the neglected dimensions of environmental ethics. Moreover, I claim that these texts' ability to form ethical judgements/arguments, though manifested quite differently, is on par with that of traditional ethical theorizing. Fictional narratives are involved in the project of ethics more than coincidentally or whimsically; they have been here all along. In fact, they can't seem to help it. The weaving of a fictional narrative relies upon underlying ethical structures just as the text's ethical discourse depends upon its narrative structures (Booth 1989, Newton 1995, Phelan 2005, 2007). The relationship is reciprocal, warp and weft. Some would even claim that ethical inquiry would be incomplete without the contributions of certain (fictional/narrative) literary texts (Nussbaum 1990). If what is meant by this is that it would be impossible to give a full account of how ethics actually happens without taking fictional narratives into account, then I wholeheartedly agree. While I am open to the stronger claim that narratives are an indispensable part of living together well, it is enough for my purposes that fictional narratives "do moral work" (Lindemann 2001, 36).

Part of what I mean by "do moral work" is the capacity to articulate ethical judgements and arguments. Fictional narratives encourage ethical judgments through their arrangement of characters/events, thoughtful world-building, and carefully crafted narration (Phelan 2007). As Nussbaum (1995, 2) writes, "[the novel] is a morally controversial form, expressing in its very shape and style, in its modes of interaction with its readers, a normative sense of life. It tells its readers to notice this and not this, to be active in these and not those ways. It leads them into

certain postures of the mind and heart and not others." Such judgements/claims are crucial to experiencing and understanding narratives (Phelan 2007). Likewise, ethical argumentation—i.e., the fitting together of ethical judgments/claims in support of each other or a larger conclusion—is integral to the way fictional narratives function on multiple levels (Nash 2014). Although these texts do not construct arguments as transparently as in traditional ethical theorizing, they are no less capable for it. That such arguments may not be constructed linearly or explicitly or be the primary focus of the text—as is the case with nearly all publications in contemporary ethics—does nothing to lessen their power. Neither does the fact that, for the most part, fictional narratives' arguments must be gleaned or felt by the reader. While these arguments are open to interpretation, they nonetheless remain bounded; there are more and less legitimate readings of such texts.[25] The creativity with which authors and readers alike weave together ethical judgements/claims is, I would argue, a distinct type of both critical thinking and argumentation. Furthermore, it demonstrates how ethical theorizing can take narrative form (Christian 1990).

Not only are narratives capable of communicating ethical judgements and arguments, they do so in a way not typically available to the genre of traditional ethical theorizing. Certain ideas, observations, feelings, etc. are best or most easily expressed by way of fictional narratives. Some ethicists have even maintained that some things can only be expressed via narrative. Nussbaum (1990, 5), for example, argues that "…certain truths about human life can only be fittingly and accurately stated in the language and forms characteristic of the narrative artist." In "Poetry is Not a Luxury" the incomparable Audre Lorde (1984, 37) regards poetry as "a revelatory distillation of experience." Poetry is "the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought. The farthest external horizons of our hopes and fears are cobbled by our poems,

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[25] In fact, there are multiple fields of scholarly inquiry (e.g., literary criticism) predicated upon this assumption.

carved from the rock experiences of our daily lives" (Lorde 1984, 37). Narratives too can be

poetic in this sense or, to use a closely related Lordean term, "erotic."[26] That is, narratives are

potential conduits for deep personal/political understanding of the sort that is actively resisted

by/in a racist patriarchal society (Lorde 1984). Put another way, given various contextually

determined constraints (e.g., linguistic, epistemic, political) sometimes it is easier—even

necessary—to "show" ethical judgements/arguments rather than "say" them, at least to begin

with. Here I have in mind a roughly Wittgensteinian distinction between "showing" and

"telling"/"saying." Recognizing that narratives communicate much beyond what they explicitly

say/tell[27], Wittgenstein writes, "Don't take it as a matter of course, but as a remarkable fact that

pictures and fictitious narratives give us pleasure, occupy our minds," (PI, §524). Personally, I

have often experienced this remarkable power of narratives. Most relevantly, it was by engaging

with certain narratives that I was first able to articulate what/who I felt was missing from the

project of environmentalism—the dead and dying.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given some of the sources of difficulty when it comes to "saying"

them directly (e.g., hermeneutical injustice), many of the ethical judgements, arguments, and

theories that are easier/best expressed through/in fictional narratives serve liberatory and/or

transformative political ends. This function is also a crucial aspect of how fictional narratives *do*

moral work. Whether or not stronger claims of narratives' unique epistemic abilities are

ultimately borne out, it is enough (again, for this project) that narratives are one of the ways by

which people articulate and absorb ethical knowledge, especially when other strategies and

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[26] In "An Interview: Audre Lorde and Adrienne Rich", Lorde (1984) explains that "Uses of the Erotic" is a progression of "Poetry is Not a Luxury." Given that "Uses of the Erotic" expands the scope of revelatory distillation from poetry to the erotic, I feel comfortable applying Lorde's insights of poetry's powers to narratives insofar as they are have the potential to be another type of erotic expression.

[27] Or, as Le Guin (1976) might say, beyond their lies.

formats fall short in the face of injustice. It must be acknowledged, however, that part of the reason these stories—and what they manage to show/argue—are needed is due to other narratives. As with most types of ethical theorizing/practice, fictional narratives can be and are employed (intentionally or not) to harm, exclude, and oppress. Stories always forge connections with deeper narratives (Murray 1997), and countless fictional narratives feed off of and nourish what many feminists have referred to as "aster narratives"[28] (e.g., Plumwood 1993, Lindemann 2001, Haraway 2008). Master narratives are not confined to fictional narratives, though (as was previously mentioned) that certainly does not mean they are true. Extending far beyond the written word, screen, stage, etc., master narratives are stories that embody and help construct unjust structures/guides through oppressive, universalizing ideologies. For example, Plumwood (1995), Haraway (2008), Kimmerer (2013), and many others have framed the nature/culture dualism—i.e., one story that gets told about "humanity's" relationship to other living beings and the places they/we call home—as a deeply destructive master narrative. It is vital, then, not to idealize or uncritically extol the moral work accomplished by narratives, fictional or otherwise. Ethical contextualization will be essential. Additionally, it will be important to keep in mind that fictional narratives are rarely are exclusively liberatory or oppressive. The spectre of master narratives persists in the best of them and ought not go unlooked for.

Recognizing that the absence of narrative(s) is not an option, critics of master narratives call for/upon liberatory "counterstories" (Lindemann 2001), "sustaining stories" (Plumwood 1995), "guides for living" (Kimmerer 2013), etc. that resist master narratives by uprooting and replacing them. Gloria Anzaldua (1990, 380) beautifully captures this work when she writes,

> …yet I am cultured because I am participating in the creation of yet another culture, a new story to explain the world and our participation in it, a new value system with images and symbols that connect us to each other and to the planet. Soy un

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[28] Not to be confused with the usage of 'master narrative' that is roughly synonymous with 'metanarrative.'

arnasamiento, I am an act of kneading, of uniting and joining that not only has produced both a creature of darkness and a creature of light, but also a creature that questions the definitions of light and dark and gives them new meanings…

Importantly, as Gerald Vizenor (2008) emphasizes, not all stories that resist master narratives are *new*. Indigenous survivance stories, for example, are in large part a continuance of stories that predate the master narratives seeking to colonize them. Neither are such stories merely reactions to master narratives; their value goes beyond their subversive capacity (Vizenor 2008).

Fictional narratives (at their best) are but one means of resisting/supplanting master narratives and injustice more generally, but they function as an important bridge between ethical imagination, theory, and practice (Lorde 1984, Nussbaum 1995, Kimmerer 2013). In the remainder of this section, I further unpack the liberatory and/or transformative political ends that narratives serve. The broad dimensions of moral work that I explore here, however, are not intended to be exhaustive. Rather, they have been selected deliberately in order to lay the groundwork for my justification (in the following two sections) of the use of science fiction for environmental ethics in general and of (post)apocalyptic science fiction (fantasy) in particular. Here, and later, I am concerned with how fictional narratives subvert, sustain, and (re)imagine. For, ultimately, my championing of certain narratives is as much about the content or purpose of their ethical claims/arguments as how they manage to make those claims/arguments.

Fictional narratives have long been celebrated for the moral/political work they do by way of their capacity for subversion (e.g., Nussbaum 1995, Le Guin 2004, Rigby 2015). Specifically, narratives are said to be subversive insofar as they resist and undermine oppressive structures, practices, ideologies, master narratives, etc. One way that stories accomplish this is by being unsettling.[29] As Nussbaum (1995, 5) comments, "…good literature is disturbing in a way

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[29] A different—though, at times, complementary—sort of project than/to the decolonial work of literally unsettling.

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that history and social science writing frequently are not. Because it summons powerful emotions, it disconcerts and puzzles. It inspires distrust of conventional pieties and exacts a frequently painful confrontation with one's own thoughts and intentions." To read is to make oneself vulnerable (Newton 1995), and the experience can often be an unnerving one, especially for those with privilege or those living in denial of their own or others' oppression. Stories unsettle by casting the familiar in a new light or revealing what lurks around/behind it. Narration can be a powerful tool in this regard (Phelan 2005, Nash 2014). Though immersing oneself in a story does not provide readers with a full access pass into another's subjectivity, adopting a fictional character's point of view—particularly those that represent a significant departure from the reader's own—can nonetheless prove uncomfortably enlightening. The unsettling feelings/judgements made possible through narration and other narrative strategies are particularly useful when they facilitate the uptake of liberatory arguments that would otherwise be overlooked or dismissed, that is, when they motivate or serve as political critique as well as to discomfort (Berne 2008).

Of course, subversive fictional narratives do more than unsettle those with privilege or in denial. Affirmation is an equally important dimension of narrative subversion. Many narratives that feed off of and nourish master narratives function to affirm the dangerous, strategic epistemic impoverishment of the privileged. While not to be overlooked[30], this is *not* the type of affirmation I have in mind here. Rather, it is fictional narratives' ability to subvert by making space for and articulating the experiences, ideologies, theories, counterstories, etc. of the oppressed or marginalized that I wish to highlight. Just as stories can unsettle those who have gotten too/unjustly cozy, for others fictional narratives help confirm that they have good reason

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[30] With regards to the overall picture of the moral work (liberatory and otherwise) accomplished by fictional narratives.

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for feeling uncomfortable—and much else besides—in the world(s)[31] outside of stories. As

Barbara Christian (1990, 343) explains, "But what I write and how I write is done in order to

save my own life. And I mean that literally. For me, literature is a way of knowing that I am not

hallucinating, that whatever I feel/know *is*. It is an affirmation that sensuality is intelligence, that

sensual language is language that makes sense." Likewise, Lorde (1984, 37, 56) tells us that the

work of giving name to and honestly exploring the (once) nameless "is not idle fantasy, but a

disciplined attention to the true meaning of 'it feels right to me'" and, I would add, of 'it feels

wrong to me.' Whether positive or negative, such affirmation is subversive for how it bolsters

knowledge that and knowers who patriarchy/racism/colonialism/etc. have a vested interest in

undermining/erasing.  And, as with stories that unsettle, affirming narratives cultivate feelings

and judgements that pave the way for and even function as liberatory critique/theory.

But stories that endeavor to affirm the oppressed/marginalized are more than critical or

subversive. As felt proof against lies, affirming fictional narratives also work to sustain. Here I

have in mind not the static sense of 'sustain' at play in environmental(ism) ethics' notions of

preservation and, at times, sustainability, but the 'sustain' of sustenance—that which nourishes.

In fact, 'stories as sustenance' might be rhetorically preferable. As Vizenor (2008, 19) claims of

the grammar of native survivance—stories of which provide one type of narrative sustenance—,

"…the suffice *ance* is a quality of action, as in *survivance, relevance, assistance*…Survivance,

then, is the action, condition, quality, and sentiments of the verb *survive*…" Christian's (1990)

above remarks about her own engagement with literature as life and sanity saving reflect both the

potency and active quality of narrative sustenance. In addition to shoring up and replenishing

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[31] I want to keep sight of the plurality of worlds as expressed in Indigenous cosmopolitics that see one of the violences of colonialism—including environmental metaphysics that—as the replacement of the pluriverse with a universe (de la Cadena 2010, Adamson 2014).

mental health, affirming fictional narratives often generate counterstories that can be wielded to repair damaged identities (Lindemann 2001).Weaving her own deeply nourishing narrative braid, Robin Kimmerer's (2013) *Braiding Sweetgrass* begins by establishing stories—new and old, affirming and unsettling—as necessary for healing both ourselves and our broken relationship with the earth, that is, as *medicine*. The implications of framing stories as medicine—i.e., that which (in part) allows us to conceive of different relationships—extends the healing dimensions of sustenance beyond restoration and into the transformative. A diet of affirming narratives does not lend itself towards maintenance but growth, strength, and change.

Thus, while vital qualities/pursuits in and of themselves, the sustenance and healing that fictional narratives have to offer oppressed and marginalized peoples are intimately bound up in their (and others') moral work of pursuing alternatives to injustice. A crucial way in which stories contribute to transformative ethics/politics is by (re)imagining. In addition to their capacity to expand the imaginative horizons of the privileged (Plumwood 1995, Kimmerer 2013), fictional narratives are also one way by which the oppressed/marginalized imagine a better/just future for themselves. In addition to its affirming/sustaining qualities, this is why Lorde (1984) argues that poetry (and the erotic) is not a luxury. Stories produce more than figments of imagination; they help us reimagine the basic "architecture of our lives" and, ultimately, work to transform the "future of our worlds" (Lorde 1984, 38, 39). To regard poetry, fictional narratives, and other sources of transformative imagination as superfluous is to discount a critical expression of liberatory futurity. Put somewhat less grandly, stories do important moral/political work not only by critiquing today world(s) but by proposing and arguing for alternatives, i.e., by theorizing about what shape the future should take.

In this section I have argued that fictional narratives—i.e., story driven ways of fashioning and fitting together inventions in order to reflect upon ourselves and/in the world—do sophisticated and necessary moral/political work. Though I initially framed fictional narratives' (a) articulation of ethical judgements, arguments, and theories and (b) contributions to liberatory and/or transformative political ends as distinct aspects of how they accomplish this work, I hope it has become clear that stories' ability to do (a) is a large part of how they achieve (b). Of course, this does not mean that all fictional narratives that communicate ethical judgements, arguments, or theories contribute to liberatory/transformative projects. Rather, the ways in which stories judge/argue/theorize is particularly well suited for the tasks of "showing" that which is hard/impossible to "say" and crafting (or connecting to) spaces/tools for saying what could only previously be shown. Narrative subversion, sustenance, and (re)imagination depend upon these alternative methods of articulating and absorbing ethical knowledge claims. Furthermore, lest we worry that framing fictional narratives' moral/political contributions as arguments/theories reduces them to more sterile or "rational" forms, the intermingling of storytelling, argumentation, and theorizing has the potential to trouble the way philosophers tend to regard the latter two.[32] In the next section I turn to the particular kinds of moral/political work that the genre of science fiction is known for and defend its contributions to the discourse(s) of environmental(ism) ethics.

### iii. What does science fiction have to offer environmental ethics?

Unlike non-genre fiction (e.g., literary fiction) and most other genre fiction[33] science fiction narratives take creative liberties not only with the details of the world but with worlds

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[32] An aspect/result that seems almost obligatory for any dissertation in feminist philosophy at this point. More on the worry of reducing narratives to theory or imposing theory upon narratives in subsection v.

[33] I will circle back round to fantasy in next section. The genre of horror lies beyond the scope of this project.

themselves. Sometimes the changes are quite subtle (e.g., Hegland 1996). With many sci-fi stories, however, there is no mistaking that the world unfolding alongside the plot is not our own (e.g., Hurley 2007). The strange and often fantastical worlds of science fiction narratives frequently attract charges—both loving and dismissive—of escapism. A common refrain seems to be that science fiction distances readers/viewers from reality while non-genre fiction immerses them further into it (Petite 2014). At the same time, science fiction is a genre widely known for subverting and reimagining unjust structures, ideologies, practices, etc. (Berne 2008, Otto 2012). I do not deny that science fiction narratives can be escapist in ways ranging from harmless to disturbing. In fact, the next subsection (IV.A.iv) is deeply concerned with one incarnation of this trend—(post)apocalyptic narratives with a problematic grip on reality. What I—and many others before me—do take issue with is the notion that the intentionally crafted differences between science fiction worlds and our own necessarily create distance or, put another way, that all kinds/methods of science fiction distancing untether readers from reality/veracity (e.g., Le Guin 2004, Berne 2008, Dillon 2012). Again, Le Guin's (2004) remarks on fiction's peculiar relationship to truth prove salient. Though, in one sense, science fiction narratives may be "more fictional" than other types of stories, how these narratives manage to weave truths out of an uncanny "pack of lies" cannot be reduced to a matter of degrees of fictionality/facticity (Le Guin 1976).

It is precisely (a) science fiction's methods for trading in such obvious "lies" or fictions and (b) the moral/political work entailed in and made possible by this trade that I am concerned with here, especially with regards to environmental ethics as a discourse (that ought to be) rethinking its place in the world. As with my discussion of narratives' involvement in ethics more broadly, this section is a weaving of well-established work in narrative ethics, ecocriticism,

and feminist politics, with a hopeful dash of my own insights thrown in for good measure. I also intentionally incorporate science fiction authors' reflections on their own craft whenever possible. I begin by outlining four components of the moral/political work accomplished by science fiction narratives—warning, critique, describing, and (re)imagination. The section concludes by considering science fiction's contributions to environmental(ism) ethics in terms of these four dimensions. In addition to pinpointing the mechanisms by which the genre (at its best) subverts environmental injustice and (re)imagines environmental justice in general, these four dimensions lay the necessary groundwork for the next section wherein I will consider the usefulness of a narrower range of science fiction (fantasy) narratives for the particular problem of global climate change.

The classic framing of science fiction's contribution to and embodiment of subversive political projects is to read these narratives as warnings. Under this interpretation, science fiction imaginatively (if not always re-imaginatively) depicts the likely future consequences of existing institutions, structures, practices, ideologies, technologies, etc. (Little 2007, Otto 2012). Science fiction stories and worlds—at least along this one dimension—can be thought of as elaborately crafted thought experiments or counterfactuals (Whyte 2017). They mobilize the "what if?" army. Of her own science fiction novel and "cautionary tale" *Parable of the Sower,* Butler (1993, 339) writes, "The idea…is to look at where we are now, what we are doing now, and to consider where some of our current behaviors and unattended problems might take us." The felt sense of warning is part of what makes science fiction like Butler's so unsettling. Some of these narratives grapple with full-fledged dystopias, while other science fiction worlds toe an uneasy line between familiarity and disturbing (Little 2007, Otto 2012). You know that you wouldn't

want to live in these worlds, but you also (a) understand that in some ways we already do or (b) fear that we may all too soon.

Like many instances of narrative unsettling, the warnings communicated by science fiction also function to critique current states of affairs, i.e., the starting points for the thought experiments, counterfactuals, or "what if?"'s. Stories accomplish such critiques in large part by articulating ethical judgements or arguments regarding the undesirability/immorality/injustice of imagined futures. Judgements and arguments of this sort serve as premises in larger, roughly consequentialist arguments.[34] Condemnation of the present is cultivated through the exploration of its probable spawn. Dystopias, for example, are often employed with this sort of journey in mind (Little 2007, Otto 2012). Science fiction narratives are also critical of existing institutions, structures, practices, ideologies, technologies, etc. for reasons that have nothing to do with their hypothetical medium/long term consequences, however likely (Dillon 2012). These stories frequently communicate judgements/arguments about the present that help make clear there's no need to wait; (spoilers) you don't have to know how things are going to turn out to know that all is not as it should be. The tilde in that counterfactual may not be so fantastical after all. In fact, the role of dystopias has always been as much about sussing out the similarities between these nightmarescapes and our current world(s) as speculating as to what they could evolve into (Otto 2012). Similarly, science fiction utopias can help illustrate the myriad ways in which our current arrangements fall short, thereby advancing ethical/political critiques as well (Little 2007).

All of this begs the question as to the relationship between the worlds created by science fiction narratives and the world(s) we live in. For these stories to communicate warnings their "starting points" need to be recognizable to the reader/viewer as something resembling (at least

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[34] E.g., If we continue to do x, y, and z, then (blank) is sure/likely to happen. For reasons u, v, and w, (blank) ought to be avoided. Therefore, we should stop doing x, y, and z.

some aspect of) their current lot. Likewise, science fiction's ability to articulate or mobilize critique hinges upon there being enough similarities between the worlds on the page/screen/stage and the reader's/viewer's. At its heart, science fiction is a genre that explores our own reality by conjuring up others, be they dystopias, utopias, or something else entirely. Such worlds are crafted, in part, to "imaginatively mirror" the one(s) we live in (Little 2007, 16). "Science fiction is not predictive; it is descriptive," writes Le Guin (1976, xii). Quoting Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* in the epigraph to *Oryx and Crake*, Margaret Atwood (2003) reminds her reader, "I could perhaps like others have astonished you with strange improbable tales; but I rather chose to relate plain matter of fact in the simplest manner and style; because my principal design was to inform you, and not to amuse you." (Good) science fiction writers know that the worlds depicted in their stories are our own. Their warnings and critiques depend upon it (Otto 2012, Gaard 2014).

But why bother with such roundabout descriptions when more straightforward ones are available elsewhere? Indeed, the descriptions provided by science fiction narratives overlap—for better or worse—with those crafted through nonfictional texts and realistic fiction. As others have observed, however, many of the distinctly value-laden descriptions communicated by science fiction are uniquely or particularly insightful (Berne 2008, Otto 2012, Dillon 2012). They tend not—as of yet—to have easy, straightforward expressions. Rather, these are the sorts of descriptions that require or, at least, benefit enormously from extensive "composting" (Le Guin 2004). From this fertile, imaginative soil, science fiction narratives labor to show/describe/"give name to" that which resists description under racism, patriarchy, colonialism, etc. (Lorde 1984). In this way, among others, the genre provides an important conduit for the erotic. For just as it is

important to remember that fictional world-building is never value-neutral,[35] we must not forget

why it is that certain aspects of our world(s) are hard to describe. Acknowledging these

difficulties, Le Guin (2004, 216) remarks on science fiction's ability to "dislodge the mind" of

both reader and author. Part of what I interpret her to be getting at here is that science fiction

narratives achieve novel or radical descriptions not by escaping, detaching, or abstracting away

from reality but by reorienting us to it. When successful, these stories communicate disturbingly

accurate, politically efficacious observations of the world(s) even while depicting entirely "made

up" people, places, and things. Altogether, this is what I mean by science fiction's "descriptive

powers," something which the genre achieves not in spite of but *because of* how its narratives

take liberties with reality.

Science fiction, however, accomplishes moral/political work beyond subverting existing

unjust institutions, structures, practices, ideologies, etc. In addition to underpinning the genre's

ability to critique and warn, science fiction's descriptive powers underwrite its efforts to imagine

alternatives. Dislodging the mind is often as much about the future as the present and past. Le

Guin (2004, 216) explains of her own approach,

> To me the important thing is not to offer any specific hope of betterment but, by
> offering an imagined but persuasive alternative reality, to dislodge my mind, and
> so the reader's mind, from the lazy, timorous, habit of thinking that the way we live
> now is the only way people can live. It is that inertia that allows the institutions of
> injustice to continue unquestioned.

In fact, she is vocal in her criticism of the fashionably dystopic, a subgenre which fails to either

genuinely engage with human suffering or enlarge the scope of ethical and political possibility

(Le Guin 2004). Good science fiction persistently challenges readers'/viewers'—as well as

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[35] This somewhat complicates the relationship between description and critique, a relationship which is admittedly more dialogical than hierarchical. Nonetheless, it still feels accurate to say that narratives' descriptions give rise to (one form of) critique and not the other way around.

authors'—boundaries, fundamental beliefs, and assumptions about the future (Dillon 2012).

Towards these ends, metaphor is a powerful tool at the disposal of science fiction writers (Berne 2008, Vizenor 2008, Otto 2012). In addition to constructing different frames of reference for past/existing practices, metaphors capture what cannot be fully expressed through words (Vizenor 2008). In this way and others, science fiction stretches the imagination, language, and, with them, the scope of future possibilities (Le Guin 2004, Berne 2008, Kimmerer 2013).

But even when they do not provide "any specific hope of betterment," science fiction narratives do more with imagination than gesture towards what the future *could* be; they argue for what it *should* be. Such (re)imaginative articulations of moral/political theory rely heavily upon stories' descriptive powers. The process of charting a different course requires knowledge of the current coordinates, trajectory, and ship's schematics. Moreover, in addition to building upon its descriptions, science fiction narratives' (re)imaginative capacity depends upon their critiques and, to some extent, warnings. For theorizing about desirable/just future alternatives requires understanding how/why the worlds depicted in these stories are undesirable/unjust, both for what they portend and as they stand. Many of the "what if?"s posed by science fiction narratives are designed to encourage *engaged* speculation that continues long after "The End" (Gaard 2014). As Whyte (2017) demonstrates through his work on living Indigenous science fiction, philosophizing counterfactually through narratives has the potential to produce recommendations for individual and collective action as well as warnings. Recalling the words of Philip K. Dick, Metis science fiction author Misha reminds us that "SF is a rebellious art form, and it needs writers and readers and bad attitudes—an attitude of 'Why?' or 'How come?' or 'Who says?'" (Dillon 2012, 184). Like poetry and traditional ethical theory alike, science fiction does its best moral/political work when it "lays the foundations for a future of change, a bridge

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across our fears of what has never been before" (Lorde 1984, 38). Such stories expand the scope of individuals' and communities' moral imagination *and* their tangible practices for living together well.

Environmental philosophy has increasingly[36] been grappling with the descriptions, warnings, critiques, and (re)imaginings articulated by science fiction narratives in order to understand and improve upon the state interspecies politics. Given that both the academic and popular incarnations of environmental ethics have historically been more open to narratives in a variety of ways, this development is somewhat less surprising than it would be for other areas of philosophy. Environmental ethicists will frequently weave stories of personal experiences or "case studies" into their writing (e.g., Plumwood 2013, Vogel 2015). Furthermore, it is not uncommon for these philosophers to engage with fictional narratives for the ethical claims they make about the environment (e.g., Bennett 2013, Gaard 2014). Indeed, an entire (joint) subfield of literary criticism and the environmental humanities—ecocriticism—is devoted to the stories we tell about the relationship between humans communities and the environment/nature (Garrard 2014, Heise 2006). There are even a handful of (nonfictional) narrative-driven texts that qualify uncontroversially as environmental philosophy full stop (e.g., Leopold 1949, Carson 1962).

Though there are—as yet—no science fiction narrative texts that are widely regarded *as* environmental philosophy, environmental ethicists have nonetheless wasted no time in employing these narratives' descriptions to flesh out the crisis/crises around which the discipline revolves (e.g., Otto 2012, Gaard 2014). They regard science fiction as a genre that is deliberately thoughtful about how people/characters engage with and in their environments or "externalities" (Gough 1998). Such stories can be powerful conduits for emotionally processing, understanding,

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[36] More on the rationale for and qualities of this recent uptick in the next section.

and, ultimately, condemning the current (longstanding) ecological paradigm (Gaard 2014).

Science fiction narratives provide environmental ethicists with theoretical back-up as well as

new avenues of critique (Yanarella 2001, Otto 2012). Many of them warn against precisely the

kinds of harms/injustices that environmental(ists) ethicists worry are coming down the pipeline

(Garrard 2012). Science fiction is particularly good at challenging conventional assumptions

about environmental futurity and, at times, working to imagine alternatives (Heise 1999,

Robinson 1994). At their best, these narratives encourage people to reexamine their values and

behaviors and to act accordingly (McMurry and Major 2012). Sometimes science fiction even

succeeds in articulating and motivating solutions for enacting transformative environmental

justice (Otto 2012, Gaard 2014).

Since reading Anthony Weston's (1992, 329, 335) *Before Environmental Ethics*, I have

also become fond of thinking of science fiction as a "quiet place"[37] for a discourse undergoing

major turmoil and (hopefully) a potential paradigm shift. Though Weston has physical, "natural"

settings in mind for environmental ethics' quiet places, his emphasis on distance, marginality,

and creative activity put me in mind of Le Guin's (2004) comments on her genre's knack for

dislodging authors' and readers' minds. Science fiction narratives provide environmental

ethics/ethicists with whole worlds by/in which to digest, distill, and create. The purpose of these

quiet places is not to produce disciplinary uniformity or settle questions once and for all but to

make space for and inspire "new" concepts, tools, and approaches, i.e., to reimagine the sorts of

descriptions, warnings, critiques, and futurities entertained by environmental ethics. Just the sort

of moral/political work at which science fiction excels. And though the genre's (re)imaginative

capabilities could (and do) prove useful for all sorts of philosophical endeavors, given the unique

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[37] Not to be confused with the new science fiction post-apocalyptic thriller *A Quiet Place* (Krasinski 2018)

theoretical and practical challenges facing environmental ethics as a result of global climate change[38] the pairing of science fiction and environmental ethics feels especially appropriate and timely.

**iv. What does (post)apocalyptic science fiction fantasy know about global climate change?**

"In a perilously warming world," Kate Rigby (2015, 2) writes, "the kinds of stories that we tell about ourselves and our relations with one another, as well as with nonhuman others and our volatile environment, will shape how we prepare for, respond to, and recover from increasingly frequent and, for the communities affected, frequently unfamiliar forms of eco-catastrophe." Likewise, Donna Haraway (2015, 160) claims, "It matters what stories tell stories, which concepts think concepts…[in the Anthropocene/Chthulucene]…we need stories (and theories) that are just big enough to gather up the complexities and keep the edges open and greedy for surprising new and old connections." Finally, Greta Gaard (2014, abstract) argues that "a feminist restor(y)ing of climate change narratives is one of ecocriticism's best strategies for confronting the root causes of climate change and suggesting solutions with real potential for enacting climate justice." Preparing, responding, recovering, conceptualizing, connecting, confronting, enacting—these are just some of the types of moral/political, heart-/back-breaking work that stories can find themselves involved in when it comes to global climate change. And though Rigby, Haraway, and Gaard surely have more than science fiction (or even fictional) narratives in mind, I believe their collective argument nonetheless applies to the genre. When it comes to climate change, it matters what kinds of science fiction stories we (re)tell. If environmental(ists) ethicists want to understand and navigate this "epoch," then the narratives

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[38] As discussed in Chapter 1.

they employ will need to accurately (a) describe and diagnose the shape of, (b) imagine and motivate innovative solutions to, and (c) sustain "us"[39] through the disaster/injustice that is global climate change.

In this section I argue that (post)apocalyptic Indigenous, Afrofuturist, and/or feminist science fiction fantasy are (among) the right kinds of stories for this work. Despite the numerous well-founded critiques of the apocalyptic trope with regards to climate change and environmental injustice more broadly, the texts I consider here not only avoid but work against these pitfalls— i.e., Anthropocenic thinking and environmental(ism's) ethics' past-orientated approach. They do this by imaginatively (re)describing the reasons for, injustice/tragedy of, and futures foreclosed and made possible by environmental catastrophe. As a result, when the characters/communities in these worlds find themselves unable to rewind the clock or maintain the status quo, they must learn to survive and build futures in ways and contexts that, though fantastical, are highly relevant to our own world(s).

Before exploring the merits of (post)apocalyptic Indigenous, Afrofuturist, and/or feminist science fiction fantasy, it will be helpful to break down the meanings of all these modifiers, both separately and, in some cases, in conjunction. To begin with, Indigenous science fiction fantasy is science fiction fantasy written/created by Indigenous people. I follow Grace Dillon's (2012) example here as she in turn draws on Simon Ortiz to frame Indigeneity for her science fiction anthology: "I have been using the word Indigenous more because while we are Native or Indigenous to the Americas, in terms of the world, there are Indigenous peoples all over the world, the people of Africa, the people of the Mid-East, the people in the Pacific, Indigenous peoples that are in the forefront of changing the world." Afrofuturist Ingrid LaFleur (2011)

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[39] More on who stories should be sustaining in a bit.

defines the genre—which predates the term—"as a way of imagining possible futures through a Black cultural lens." Director and author Ytasha Womack (2013, 9) elaborates, "Both an artistic aesthetic and a framework for critical theory, Afrofuturism combines elements of science fiction, historical fiction, speculative fiction, fantasy, Afrocentricity, and magic realism with non-Western beliefs." Like feminism in general, feminist science fiction fantasy is somewhat tricky to pin down.[40] For my purposes, I am interested in those feminist stories that adopt intersectional, transformative values, politics, or approaches. In the interest of full transparency, however, of the narratives I work with in this project that are feminist *alone* are mostly written by white women of settler descent. Though to be perfectly clear, I do not understand 'Indigenous,' 'Afrofuturist,' and 'feminist' as mutually exclusive categories. (Post)apocalyptic science fiction fantasy authors and narratives can be more than one of these things. And some—e.g., Nalo Hopkinson's work—arguably fall under all three banners.

Complicating matters further, science fiction—which I so studiously avoided defining outright in the previous section—is itself a disputed category (Berne 2008, Rigby 2015). Indeed, according to traditional genre boundaries, a number of the texts I engage with wouldn't make the cut. Instead they would be demoted to 'magic realism' or, god forbid, 'fantasy.' Somewhat ironically, science fiction has sought to set itself apart from other imaginative fiction—and, thereby, closer to literary fiction—by limiting the genre to the so-called known laws of reality (Berne 2008). Parsing the 'real' from the 'fantastical' is complicated—even beyond Le Guin's (2004) observations—by the fact that such determinations are largely made by white male critics/authors and are frequently employed to marginalize the writing/creations of persons of color (Rigby 2015). Out of concern for this disturbing trend, the boundary between science

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[40] It doesn't help matters that many science fiction authors—most notoriously Margaret Atwood—are hesitant to adopt the label for themselves and their work. Ursula Le Guin, it must be noted, had no such qualms.

fiction and fantasy is not one I am interested in policing. If my flexible approach results in the blurring or rearrangement of the genres, then so much the better. Marginalized science fiction authors have consistently experimented with or worked to change the genre's boundaries, and I would be happy to be in such excellent company (Dillon 2012).

I also include fantasy in this section (and beyond) because I disagree that these stories are not just as accountable to reality—environmental or otherwise—as science fiction. As a genre, fantasy is equally capable of warning, critiquing, describing, and (re)imagining towards liberatory political ends. The biggest difference between science fiction and fantasy is that the creations of the latter (on average) spend more time in the compost bin. Rather, my primary rationale for not discussing fantasy narratives in the last section was that the available sources dealt almost exclusively with science fiction. No doubt, in part, given science fiction's raced/gendered clout, there has been far less analysis, theorizing, and criticism[41] of/about fantasy in general and, more specifically, as a (liberatory) moral/political resource or force. While it is true that fantasy tends to frame narrative conflict in terms of good versus evil (perhaps) more frequently than does science fiction, this is but a one kind of descriptive shortcoming and not one on which fantasy has a monopoly. As Le Guin (2004, 219) notes, science fiction—dystopias in particular—and fantasy narratives alike can be "timid and reactionary." Of climate science fiction in particular, Gaard (2014) laments these stories' distinctly paltry grip on the ideologies, technologies, and politics responsible for global climate change. Both genres abound with unhelpful—if at times entertaining—apocalyptic narratives depicting monolithic forces or entities (e.g., evil, chaos, a colossal asteroid) hell-bent on destroying the world/universe.

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[41] In the sense of 'literary criticism.'

If stories like these[42] won't cut it, exactly what kinds of narratives do I have in mind by putting '(post)apocalyptic' in front of science fiction fantasy? Without divulging too many details prematurely—even philosophy has its story arc to consider—, I offer a sketch of the narrative qualities I am after. To start, these are stories that unfold in the midst or the (short or long term) wake of a breaking point of some kind. Environmental factors may either be at the forefront of crisis or part of a larger complex tapestry. In any event, there can/must be no "going back." The past, however, is neither entirely lost nor irrelevant. For one, these are stories that provide contextualization for the complex causes of the crisis/apocalypse/catastrophe/disaster their worlds are undergoing. The past—in all its multifaceted messiness—is still as relevant as ever. And even if, as is a hallmark of apocalypse, parts of the past are tragically or triumphantly irretrievable, the characters/communities in these stories actively grapple with the question of which surviving aspects of their pasts are worth holding on to and which should be let go. Partly for this reason, I hesitate to categorize the worlds created in/by these narratives as dystopias across the board. Though most are far from utopic, just as the causes of apocalypse are complex, what they give rise to is perhaps even more complicated. These are worlds that exist to do more than warn/alarm us, however unsettling their rupturing may be. All that being said, quite a few of the "alternative" apocalyptic texts I engage with could themselves be read as mobilizing monolithic forces/entities, e.g. the Icarus asteroid of *Icarus Descending* (Hand 1993) or the "Evil Earth" of the *Broken Earth* trilogy (Jemisin 2015-17). Rather than reiterating problematic apocalyptic conventions and norms, however, I would argue that these narratives are subversive (in part) because of their seeming proximity to such tropes. Science fiction fantasy apocalypses,

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[42] Actual examples to follow momentarily.

of course, fall across a wide and variable spectrum. Even among the narratives I defend, there are those that describe, warn, critique, and (re)imagine better or worse than others.

Before delving further into these (re)imaginative (post)apocalyptic worlds, it is important to note that many solid critiques have been made of both particular apocalyptic narratives and the trope in general (e.g., Garrard 2012, Gaard 2014, Whyte 2017). Here, critics (and I) have in mind popular films and novels like *Interstellar* (2014 Nolan), *The Day After Tomorrow* (Emmerich 2004), the *Mistborn* series (Sanderson 2006-8), the *Science in the Capital* trilogy (Robinson 2004-7), and *Noah* (Aronofsky 2014). Though each of these narratives explores or evokes some decently nuanced element of global climate change—e.g., (respectively) emotional knowledge, anxiety, the unequal distribution of privilege/vulnerability across class, the role of the scientist, non-human suffering—, they are descriptively lacking and morally/politically unimaginative in the ways that matter most for climate justice. Immensely creative when it comes to the metaphysics of magic and space/time, both *Mistborn* and *Interstellar* offer overly simplistic and largely apolitical explanations—e.g., (respectively) the forces of chaos and an unstoppable blight—for the planet's declining ability to support life. Somewhat surprisingly, *Noah* demonstrates significantly more moral/political sophistication by linking its ecological crisis to unsustainable (and cruel) human practices; but the film fails to complicate the biblical narrative of "humanity's" near universal descent into sin for audiences living through an ecological calamity with decidedly skewed anthropogenic causal mechanisms. Even the "hard"[43] science fiction of the *Science in the Capital* trilogy largely divorces the causes of and possible solutions to global climate change from social justice (Gaard 2014). And then there's *The Day After*

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[43] And, therefore, assuredly more realistic. Also, I need to just take a moment to appreciate the sheer hilarity of the efforts on the part of many white, male science fiction authors and critics to make their genre harder and harder.

*Tomorrow*, a blockbuster that stretches the bounds reality (and credibility) not to dislodge the mind but for the sake of spectacle.

Even as he outlines a fairly devastating critique of the trope, ecocritic Greg Garrard (2012) acknowledges that apocalypse is one of the most powerful metaphors that environmental(ism) ethics has at its disposal. Apocalyptic rhetoric "is capable of galvanizing activists, converting the undecided, and ultimately, perhaps, of influencing government and commercial policy" (Garrard 2012, 104). However, such power, as Garrard and others (e.g., Morton 2013, Gaard 2014, Whyte 2017) argue, is problematic and dangerous when derived from simplistic, reductive stories. These are "truncated" narratives that pick up at the moment of crisis without attending adequately (or at all) to its origins and, in particular, its politics (Gaard 2014). Climate change ethics/policies built upon or influenced by this kind of apocalyptic rhetoric are likewise truncated (Gaard 2014, Rigby 2015). Even when framed as anthropogenic, apocalypse is typically construed in ways that obfuscate how responsibility for and vulnerability under climate change—and other destructive anthropogenic environmental phenomena—are unjustly attributed/distributed (Cuomo 2011, Whyte 2017). Instead, apocalyptic narratives tend to sensationalize environmental destruction for a particular audience. These stories overwhelmingly represent, center, and cater to white, male, and/or environmentally privileged perspectives. Such apocalypses (and audiences) demand a "relatable" hero who is charged with and, ultimately, succeeds in saving the world from annihilation (Gaard 2014). Of course, this highlights another way in which many science fiction fantasy apocalypses are often descriptively, admonitorily, critically, and (re)imaginatively unhelpful; climate change does not represent the literal end of "the world." As Garrard (2012, 107) notes, "The real moral and political challenge of ecology may lie in accepting that the world is not about to end, that human beings are likely to survive

even if Western-style civilization does not." Yet even when they acknowledge this reality, apocalyptic narratives can "feed into the desire for a new frontier and a new start" in typical colonial fashion (Dillon 2014, 144). Instead of being used to (re)imagine the scope of possible solutions and futures, apocalypse is employed to reaffirm the status quo or to construct "some nihilistic Noah's Ark" (Morton 2013, 100).

These critiques reveal a slew of reasons to be wary of apocalyptic narratives and rhetoric. Especially relevant to this project are the troubling connections between these stories and (a) the past-oriented approach to environmental ethics and, relatedly, (b) Anthropocenic thinking. Both discourses/ideologies are deeply invested in the idea of holding back the apocalypse. Conflict in apocalyptic narratives generally revolves around pulling "us" back from the brink or keeping the worst damage at bay. The prospect of teetering past the edge—i.e., the *post*apocalyptic—is so unsettling that worlds catapulted past the breaking point cannot (from these ideological perspectives) be offered/read as more than hypothetical futures or cautionary tales. In conjunction with (a) and (b), apocalypse thereby serves to erase past and present forms of environmental racism/injustice and the insidious, fundamental linkages between colonization and climate change (Dillon 2014, Whyte and Cuomo 2016, Whyte 2017). Even when more Anthropocene leaning stories acknowledge that global climate change will inevitably result in some degree of irrevocable damage, tragedy, or injustice, the bulk of *the past* remains untarnished. Moreover, such apocalyptic narratives are regularly mired in despair or fixated on "pioneering" into the future. The anthropogenic roots of apocalypse are acknowledged but are often alarmingly decontextualized and universalized across "the species." Species talk/thinking of this kind is made possible by the colonial binary trap of conceptualizing humans as either agents of environmental change or noble savages more akin to creatures (Chakrabarty 2009,

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Tuck and Yang 2012, Lepori 2015). In a perverse reiteration of Lockean property politics, you either (i) cause climate through your own labor/activity and are human or (ii) lack the capacity to do so and are a agentless, victimized part of nature. But in the end, as the story goes, the Anthropocene will have us all end up in the same boat at the whim of global climate change. In its traditional apocalyptic guise, then, global climate change is conceptualized as the great equalizer. And yet, not only do the (post)apocalyptic Indigenous, Afrofuturist, and/or feminist science fiction narratives I am interested in somehow manage to avoid these pitfalls, they also work to subvert and (re)imagine alternatives to both (a) and (b). In the remainder of this section I turn my attention to what makes these stories different.

When authors and readers/viewers approach science fiction fantasy as primarily descriptive rather than anxiously predictive or admonitory, the (post)apocalypse takes on a very different quality. Apocalypse no longer looms on the horizon; it occupies the present and, especially for postapocalyptic worlds, the past. Obviously, when (post)apocalypse functions descriptively it does not fit within an eschatological story arc. Instead, Indigenous, Afrofuturist, and feminist science fiction fantasy tends to frame apocalypse as a turning/breaking point, i.e., "a moment of grave danger that also harbors liberating potentials" (Rigby 2015). Apocalypse is not The End but *an* ending, one which, though deeply tragic, could be the beginning of positive radical transformation (Dillon 2014, Rigby 2015). And though the end of the world is already well underway in these stories—aligning them with Garrard's (2012) vision of tragic apocalypse—, this does not compromise their usefulness. Rather, these narratives' moral/political applicability is enhanced by their ability to imaginatively mirror how, for many peoples, environmental dystopia/apocalypse is far from a new phenomenon (Whyte 2017). As author N.K. Jemisin (2015, 1) articulates in *The Fifth Season*, "Let's start with the end of the

world, why don't we? Get it over with and move on to more interesting things…But this is the way the world ends. This is the way the world ends. This is the way the world ends. For the last time." Indigenous, Afrofuturist, and/or feminist science fiction fantasy illustrate that—and how—the world(s) has ended many times. Such endings are not, however, meant to reflect the inevitable partnership of life and death. Something that this sort of apocalyptic framing makes very clear is that these endings were not unavoidable, accidental, or healthy; they result directly from unjust intra-/intercommunal politics. Instead of the *Reader's Digest* version, these narratives are working with the unabridged story.

These branches of science fiction fantasy are able to excel at this descriptive work in large part because of how carefully they attend to the intersections of gender, race, class, sexuality, etc. and the politics that produce and are produced by them (Otto 2012, Gaard 2014). Their stories revolve around a panoply of thoroughly contextualized characters and narrative perspectives. Additionally, they center positionalities and identities not historically/typically represented in science fiction fantasy. By contrast, even when mainstream apocalyptic science fiction fantasy deigns to carve out space for underrepresented voices, these stories tend to fall short when it comes to describing (and critiquing) the conditions of these characters' and communities' marginalization and oppression (Gaard 2014). Indigenous, Afrofuturist, and/or feminist science fiction fantasy world-building, on the other hand, is especially adept at communicating such descriptions (and critiques), however fantastically rendered. Even when they do not (explicitly or metaphorically) link the turning point of apocalypse to global climate change, such narratives can be helpful so long as the anthropogenic causal mechanism and social justice elements remain central (Schatz 2012, Rigby 2015). Regardless of the precise anthropogenic mechanism(s), the practical results are the same; if the characters and

communities in these science fiction fantasy worlds cannot go backwards, they must go forwards. All of this is to say—it matters how narratives construe apocalypse and through *whose* stories they do so. When apocalypse can be counted amongst a story's successful descriptive elements, not only is environmentalism's understanding of climate change (past and present) greatly enhanced but the kinds of warnings, critiques, and futures available to the discourse shift dramatically and for the better.

By construing the (post)apocalypse as a past event and/or an ongoing reality, the warnings articulated by science fiction fantasy take on an entirely different flavor. Indigenous, Afrofuturist, and/or feminist science fiction fantasy does not (generally) implore readers/viewers to pull back from the/a brink. These are stories that revolve around questions of how to do right by ourselves and others through end times and beyond (Rigby 2015). Many of these warnings caution readers/viewers about what can happen when we fail to recognize the apocalypse for what it is—an ending—and cling too tightly to (the wrong parts of) the past. Before they can move forward, the denizens of (post)apocalyptic worlds must comprehend, emotionally process, and—when appropriate—take responsibility for the rupture, scarring, and imbalance surrounding and within them (Dillon 2014). When characters/communities fail to undertake this work, they threaten their own and/or others' survival. And when stories end there—as is sometimes the case—they can still be instructive. For, as these narratives consciously demonstrate, acknowledging that the future will not mirror the past is the first step towards recovery and justice. From there, characters and communities begin the laborious process of determining what pieces of the past can/must be salvaged and what can/must not be. In this way, the warnings articulated by Indigenous, Afrofuturist, and/or feminist science fiction fantasy help to illuminate

the necessarily transformative, unavoidably trauma oriented, and *potentially* healing quality of environmental(ism) ethics in the time of climate change.

These demands, realities, and possibilities are also laid bare through the critiques articulated by/in these stories. In fact, as was previously discussed, science fiction fantasy warnings depend upon and function partially as critique. Beyond warning of the likely future consequences of unsustainable/unjust survival strategies, a crucial aspect of the moral/political work that (post)apocalyptic Indigenous, Afrofuturist, and/or feminist science fiction fantasy narratives accomplish is their subversion of those structures, ideologies, practices, etc. responsible for global climate change.[44] These stories help to "disrupt the current relationship people have with their ecology" by theorizing around the basic premise that climate change constitutes an injustice (Schatz 2012, 21). Narratives accomplish such critique (in part) through descriptive judgements/arguments that reveal the deep, intersectional roots of environmental suffering and harms. As Rigby (2015) notes, the source of 'apocalypse'—'*apokalyptien*'—means to uncover that which was previously concealed. There is a reason it's called the *Book of Revelation*. Of course, science fiction fantasy—and narratives more broadly—are also capable of articulating this sort of moral/political critique without temporally condensing environmental injustice into exaggerated breaking points. What gets emphasized through a (post)apocalyptic narrative framing, however, is the observation that climate change—past, present, and future— involves tremendous losses of beings, persons, communities, ecosystems, species, etc. Not only is this tragic, but as these narratives make clear, a crucial aspect of theorizing the injustice of climate change. Their critique, therefore, serves to highlight the ways in which the work of transformative climate justice is inevitably bound up in dealings with the dead and dying.

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[44] I do not mean to imply that the categories of "unstainable/unjust survival strategies" and "those structures, ideologies, practices, etc. responsible for global climate change" do not overlap.

Given their descriptive, admonitory, and critical departures from the mainstream, the narratives of Indigenous, Afrofuturist, and/or feminist science fiction fantasy (re)imagine and invest in very different sorts of futures. In this context, (re)imagination is not (primarily) employed to save the world from disaster but to weather and recover from it. The temporal rupture of apocalypse is invaluable here for its ability to "dislodge the mind" (Le Guin 2004, 216). Premised upon a radical break with the past, (post)apocalyptic narratives provide space for authors, characters, communities, readers, and viewers to explore non-past-oriented ethical approaches for dealing with environmental and societal injustices/crises. (Post)apocalypse is a "quiet place" specially attuned to subverting the tendency of environmental(ism) ethics to focus almost exclusively on preservation and restoration (Weston 1992, 335). In the (post)apocalypse, these ethical dimensions/tools are either no longer possible or only two among a slew of urgent priorities. Such stories—like most of environmental ethics—may not offer specific templates for action/change, but their worlds are developed with the goal of exploring values, concepts, and practices for "dancing with disaster" as it unfolds over time (Rigby 2015).

Once again, however, it is not only the temporal orientation of these worlds but *whose* futures hang in the balance that sets them apart. Indigenous, Afrofuturist, and/or feminist science fiction fantasy intentionally (re)centers beings, persons, and communities on the receiving end of climate change (and intersecting) injustice(s). In addition to shaping how these stories describe the past and present, shifting the narrative perspective in this way dramatically affects how the future gets (re)imagined. Rather than envisioning how those largely responsible for environmental injustice (aka "humankind") might redeem themselves or survive, these narratives refuse to reassure the environmentally privileged that they or their forms of life will persist. Quite the opposite, these stories—at their most radical and hopeful—reveal how privileged

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futurities must "give way" in both the texts themselves and the world beyond the page/screen if marginalized futurities are to proliferate (Vizenor 2008, Tuck and Yang 2012). The primary narrative arc, however, does not generally revolve around the competing or incommensurable futurities of the environmentally privileged and oppressed[45] but around conflicts internal to (re)imagining oppressed and marginalized futurities (Vizenor 2008, Dillon 2014).[46] For example, as Dillon (2014) notes, Indigenous science fiction often curates hope for a brighter future alongside and, at times, in contrast or tension with nostalgia for what/who has been irrevocably lost (Dillon 144). Here, and elsewhere, we have characters and communities navigating the temporally, ecologically, and politically fraught (post)apocalyptic landscape by moving forward on their own terms and not merely in reference/response to their oppressors (Vizenor 2008).

Additionally, the (re)centering of marginalized characters, communities, and futurities is a crucial way that Indigenous, Afrofuturist, and/or feminist narratives do sustaining moral/political work in the time of climate change. Descriptively and critically, these stories are felt proof against the lie that is the Anthropocene, that is, the narrative of a world and a species on the brink. Rather, the worlds that the reader/viewer encounters are those that have already ended, often repeatedly. As "archives of trauma" (post)apocalyptic narratives such as these "…enable the acknowledgement of a past that can be painful to remember, impossible to forget, and resistant to consciousness" (Cvetkovich 2003, 241). Or, as Lorde (1984) might offer, these stories help enable us to give name to nameless endings so that they can be thought and felt. Of course, Lorde makes very clear that the practice of naming or archiving these endings/traumas (through science fiction fantasy or otherwise) is an essential aspect of transformative healing and

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[45] This approach, in all but the most careful narratives, has a tendency to center—once again—privileged futurities.
[46] *Black Panther* (Coogler 2018) is a tremendous example of this insofar as the white, settler villain is killed off early, allowing the narrative conflict to center on divergence represented through Killmonger and T'Challa.

justice. "For once we begin to feel deeply all the aspects of our lives, we begin to demand from ourselves and from our life-pursuits that they feel in accordance with that joy which we know ourselves to be capable of" (Lorde 1984, 57). Affirming[47] (post)apocalyptic narratives provide sustenance by calling attention to and (re)imaginatively theorizing the beginnings/rebirths to be found in the hollows and rents left by (once) nameless endings. As Mrs. Who (quoting Rumi) tells Meg Murry, the struggling protagonist of Ava DuVernay's (2018) race-bent adaptation of Madeleine L'Engle's (1962) *A Wrinkle in Time*, "The wound is the place where the light enters you."

### v. Overview and concluding considerations

My aim in this section (IV.A) has been to provide an explanation of how it is that (post)apocalyptic Indigenous, Afrofuturist, and/or feminist science fiction fantasy narratives have so much to contribute to the ethics and politics of climate change. I began, in subsection ii, by defending the claim that fictional narratives in general are capable of doing invaluable moral/political work by way of subversion, (re)imagination, and sustenance. In subsection iii, I argued that science fiction narratives' descriptive powers (can) enable them to warn, critique, and (re)imagine in ways and (of) things that ought to be of particular interest for environmental(ism) ethics. Finally, in subjection iv, we were introduced to the specific range of narratives that I champion and I defended their use of the (post)apocalyptic trope as not only unproblematic but as actively undermining (via subversion) and building beyond (via (re)imagination and sustenance) those approaches/ideologies that stand in the way of environmental(ism) ethics properly conceptualizing and attending to climate injustice.

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[47] In the specific sense discussed in subsection ii.

It is in this last subsection (IV.A.iv) that the relevance of various components of my "narrative act" becomes clear. I read not only to keep track of relevant thematic elements but to ascertain a narrative's political dynamics and ideological commitments because without doing so it is impossible to assess what a narrative is describing and, thereby, critiquing and warning of. For the same reasons, my engagement with these narratives is necessarily supplemented by (a) discussions with others (e.g., friends, colleagues, family, etc.) and (b) research as to (i) different expert interpretations and (ii) the contexts out of which these emerge and to which/whom they are directed. Without these forms of social and scholarly dialogue I rarely have enough information to determine what's going on across all the different dimensions/themes that bear upon my ultimate research objectives. Given my white settler positionality, this is especially true when it comes to Indigenous and/or Afrofuturist narratives. Engaging properly/ethically with these narratives often requires me to educate myself about what has gone into an author's compost pile to produce such rich—and somewhat unfamiliar—soil.

How do I know when a narrative is "suitable" for my project? Sometimes, as with NK Jemisin's (2015) *The Fifth Season* it's as simple as reading the inside cover flap and knowing I've struck gold. Other times, as with Emily Skrutskie's (2016) *The Abyss Surrounds Us*, I cannot be sure until the very end if a narrative will turn out to be a foil for or positively contribute to my ultimate analysis. More often, narratives wind up being problematic in some ways and inspiring/transgressive in others. The more I have expanded my reading beyond more mainstream feminist science fiction fantasy and into Afrofuturism and Indigenous narratives the more I have had to reassess texts previously deemed useful. Likewise, the more contextualizing (scholarly) research I engage in, the more my ethical/political interpretations of texts shift. Especially by comparison, many (settler) feminist narratives are decidedly lacking when it comes

to race and colonialism. Sometimes these moments of reassessment cause me to put a narrative aside, but the process more typically results in a gingerly or circumscribed implementation of their ethical contributions. Unless the problems are especially pervasive or foundational to the narrative, I aim to be generous with texts and use what I can while leaving behind what doesn't work. Interestingly, one of the book series that inspired this project—Margaret Atwood's (2003-2013) *MaddAddam* trilogy—almost didn't make the cut in the end. Ultimately, I decided that though first novel may be beyond salvaging (due to problematic character and world-building), the second and third do some really interesting work even while building upon the plot points and world of the first. Determining what narratives are suitable for this project is a constant, messy negotiation.

Striking a balance between applying theory to narratives and letting narratives speak/theorize for themselves is another tricky, ongoing process. Narrative ethicists have historically been quite vocal about their condemnation of philosophers who foist preconceived ethical frameworks onto narrative texts (e.g., Booth 1998, Newton 1995, Phelan 2007, Nash 2014). Literary scholar James Phelan (2014, 11) contends,

> Individual narratives explicitly or more often implicitly establish their own ethical standards in order to guide their audiences to particular ethical judgements…The rhetorical theorist, in other words, does not do ethical criticism by applying a pre-existing ethical system to the narrative, however much he may admire the ethics elaborated by Aristotle, Kant, Levinas, or any other thinker; instead the rhetorical theorist seeks to reconstruct the ethical principles upon which the narrative is built.

Furthermore, philosophers and rhetorical theorists alike are supposed to let texts tell their whole stories before responding to them (Newton 1995, 69). In defense of apocalyptic imagery ecocritic Eric Schatz (2012, 28, 30) goes further still, claiming, "It is not the ecocritic's task to proscribe how other people should interact with the environment…ecocritics must adopt tactics

that can most effectively influence other people without prescribing end goals…apocalyptic imagery is ideal for this task."

There is a decent amount tension between my methodology and that of these narrative ethicists and ecocritics. I approach narratives with an explicit eye towards uncovering alternative (i.e., non-past-oriented, non-Anthropocenic) approaches to environmental ethics. From the very first page/frame I track (primarily) predetermined themes like memory, futurity, community, and death. And while I wait until finishing a text to conduct a thorough analysis, I know myself to be "responding" to narratives well before their terminus. This is especially true when supplementary research is needed along the way (e.g., when I had to familiarize myself with the colonization of the Congo in order to better understand the alternative history of Nishi Shawl's (2016) *Everfair*). And yet, in spite of these methodological divergences I would argue that I do not allow theory— mine or others'—to speak *for* narratives (Rebolledo 1990, 336, 344); I am not in the business of creating the "hieroglyphs" but interpreting them (Christian 1990, 350). At most (worst?), there may be some co-creating occurs as text, reader, and background research are brought into dialogue with each other. This methodology seems to line up more or less with that of feminist ecocritics like Joni Adamson (e.g., 2014) and Stacy Alaimo (e.g., 2016) who don't shy away from engaging with literature in order to articulate ethical/political analyses and prescriptions.

The primary reason why none of this feels like foisting theory or outside ethical standards onto narratives is because it was these stories in particular that initially inspired my project. I had not formulated these themes/concepts until engaging with narratives of this sort. And, still, I do not often find them grappled with—in theory or practice—outside of these contexts.[48] Additionally, it is not my intention to distill *principles* from these narratives but *dimensions* of

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[48] "These contexts" = both the narratives themselves and the local authorial soils that produced them.

ethical practice and theory pertaining to the dead and dying of climate change. Ultimately, my goal is to weave a story from stories, to fit carefully curated threads loosely together in ways both harmonious and dissonant.

### B. Why Draw upon Narratives in Conjunction with Practice?

Drawing on Ursula Le Guin (1976) and others (e.g., Berne 2008, Otto 2012, Dillon 2012) I have argued that science fiction (fantasy) is descriptive. The warnings, critiques, and (re)imaginings that these narratives manage to impart rely upon their descriptive powers, i.e., their ability to "imaginatively mirror" the word beyond the page/screen (Little 2007). And while it may be tempting to frame these texts' contributions to environmental ethics as stemming more or less exclusively from (re)imaginative visions of a *future* yet to be realized, this may be yet another trick of Anthropocenic thinking. If we take seriously the idea that Indigenous, Afrofuturist, and/or feminist narratives are describing world endings that have already happened and are integral to those currently underway (Yusoff 2018), then it seems reasonable to conclude that the non-past-oriented, non-Anthropocenic ethics/politics they articulate already exist in some form or to some degree. In other words, in addition to (re)imaginatively theorizing about the future, these narratives craft descriptions of nonfictional past and ongoing practices for grappling with environmental/climate injustice. In fact, the former is often built upon the latter. To make no attempt to seek out and engage with these practices/practitioners would not only impoverish any attempts to distill/interweave the ethical tools from these descriptions, it would be unforgivably hubristic.

Both the stories and lived practices I consider grow out of and respond to the same or kindred world endings and injustices. In addition to providing necessary context for situating and understanding science fiction fantasy descriptions, critiques, warnings, and (re)imaginings, lived

practices provide invaluable contrast for highlighting where life, art, and theory diverge. The

lived practices I draw upon are strategies for attending to and surviving apocalypse. Tensions

and departures between these practices and fictional explorations of (in)justice for

(post)apocalyptic worlds cannot be overlooked. Tracing these dissonances is necessary for

distinguishing descriptive inaccuracies from (re)imaginative future visioning. Avoiding warped

patches of a mirror—or discarding those whose backing has melted beyond repair—is

complicated by the fact that (re)imaginative mirroring is often employed as a strategy for

dislodging the mind. Sometimes the *intention* is for the fictional world and the "real" world to

clash in certain ways in order to get at nonfictional elements that cannot be seen/approached

straight on. "Tell all the truth but tell it slant," Emily Dickinson (1998) and queer theorists tell

us. In such instances, the trope of mirror seems apt. Much like Perseus with Athena's burnished

shield, there are times when it is wise to rely upon reflections rather than risk petrification.

Nonetheless, tensions between science fiction fantasy descriptions and lived practices must be

marked even when beyond my ability to parse.

Given that this project is limited to indirect engagement with lived practices and

practitioners,[49] it is worth considering what it means to draw on people's stories of their

(communities') lived practices without doing the hard work of community building and

interpersonal dialogue. Especially when many of the practices I plan to engage with are those of

marginalized peoples/communities, how exactly is this method of engagement ethical (or is it)? I

wish to acknowledge that it would be far preferable to learn from practitioners directly and

(when appropriate/possible) participate myself in the work of palliation and remembrance. This

would be a stronger methodology not only because I would undoubtedly be able to develop a

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[49] As discussed in subsection III.B.

better understanding of lived practices but because doing so would allow (though not guarantee that) my research to be more consensual, responsive, and reciprocal. However, since I cannot obtain direct consent from practitioners, I must take particular care with how I put their work into conversation with theories/rhetoric not explicitly referenced in their stories. For example, if a practitioner does not use the rhetoric of memory/forgetting, I will need to make a strong case—supplemented by other voices from within the same community[50]—for why it may be appropriate to identify the work they do as remembrance.

Because my project cannot be responsive to practitioners' direct input as it develops into a dissertation, the conclusions it draws must be framed as provisional, pending practitioner feedback. Concerns of both consent and responsiveness make clear why it is important to curate texts wherein practitioners/communities are telling their own stories whenever possible. Likewise, without direct engagement it may prove quite difficult for my work to be reciprocal; as I researcher I benefit tremendously from incorporating lived practices into my analyses, but practitioners and their communities do not directly benefit from my research. In the future, cultivating interpersonal dialogue between practitioners and myself would not only allow for my work to receive necessary critique but, potentially, for practitioners to adopt anything they may find useful. Ultimately, I am skeptical whether promising to be "careful" with these stories is enough to ensure my methodology is sufficiently ethical. Given that my only other option at this time is to ignore the very existence of these practices, I have decided to connect them—however imperfectly—to their fictional counterparts and expect many revisions down the road.

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[50] Another reason why "outside" scholarship is necessary for developing a rich understanding of context.

## C.  Why Bring Scholarship into It at All?

In addition to certain fictional narratives and (the stories of) lived practices, my project relies upon traditional scholarship to attend to absent and underdeveloped dimensions of environmental(ism) ethics. From a more professional or pragmatic place, I engage with scholarship because, as a scholar myself, it feels important to acknowledge my influences and connect my work to larger conversations.[51] As with the balance to be struck between narratives and (outside) theory, I endeavor to incorporate scholarship into the conversation between fictional narratives and lived practices without letting those theories dominate. It is for this reason that I regard scholarly texts as supplementary rather than primary. Though they provide necessary context and, at times, helpful conceptual apparatus, they do not get the last word. In fact, while the lived practices I engage with offer evidence that extra-scholarly communities are very much capable of exploring neglected dimensions and alternative framings of environmental ethics, the portrait of the mainstream discourse developed in Chapter 1 would suggest that environmental(ism) ethics has not fared as well by neglecting these linkages. Put another way, professionalized environmentalism in the time of climate change needs these narratives/practices and not the other way around. Thus, part of my motivation for prioritizing fictional narratives and lived practices is not only to help ensure that environmental(ism) ethics no longer ignores or perpetrates violence to those communities already living the (post)apocalypse but to continue the work of others (e.g., Whyte 2017, Murdock and Knoll *forthcoming*) in making this a discipline that stands in solidarity with them.

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[51] Specifically, those conversations described in subsection II.C.

## V. Conclusion

With a few minor tweaks, the methodology I have developed and defended in this chapter could be employed to bolster, rethink, and explore any number of dimensions or projects belonging to environmental(ism) ethics. This dissertation, however, is focused primarily on addressing the discourse's oversight of what is owed to the dead and the dying in the time of global climate change. In what follows, I offer palliative and remembrance ethics as two tools/strategies for attending to these neglected questions/beings. I rely upon a carefully curated selection of narratives, practices, and scholarship to develop these concepts, the ultimate goal being to generate a flexible assemblage of dimensions of palliative and remembrance ethics and to suggest ways to navigate the politics of practicing them (i) as part of a transformative environmental ethics (ii) in a deeply unjust world.

# CHAPTER THREE

## Working Palliation and Remembrance:

## Environmental Ethics for the Dying and the Dead

### I: Remembering (on) the Farm

This is the story I was told. I am Julia Dorothy Gibson, daughter of Henry Hall Gibson, son of Katharine Belden Ryder Gibson, daughter of Ely Morgan Talcott Ryder, son of Henry Clay Ryder, son of Colonel Stephen Ryder, son of Eleazer Ryder, who built the family homestead—The Sycamores—in 1795 on the crest of a hill in the town of Southeast (now part of Brewster) in Putnam County, New York. The Sycamores, so named for the pair of trees that sheltered it, lies at the narrative heart of my heritage and that of Ryder Farm, the place I know as home. The farm was incorporated in the early 20th century to safeguard Aunt Mary in her dotage, resulting in the unusual arrangement wherein the 4th of July family reunion begins with an annual shareholders' meeting. Gifted a share by my Gan as a small child, I was raised to regard these meetings with great solemnity. Though often quite contentious—with the family sometimes splintering along ideological factions or bloodlines—the message was clear; this was our Farm and, as Ryders, we were charged with caring for and protecting its future while preserving its past and the labors/wishes of Ryders who came before us. To fail to do so would be devastating beyond comprehension.

And the anxiety of losing the Farm was/is seemingly grounded in reality, because both Farm and homestead were/are understood to be perennially under threat by some outside—and occasionally inside—force, whether it be skyrocketing taxes, encroaching development, changes to tradition, falling tree limbs, or a younger generation that carelessly slams screen doors and

leaves the hammock out in the rain. My own grandfather—H. Hall Gibson—was represented in this tumultuous story as one of the Farm's saviors. He who married into the family, fell in love with the Farm, and retired here in the late seventies to found one of the first organic farms in the Northeast and secure agricultural tax abatement. Before him it was my great grandfather Ely. After, my cousins Betsey Ryder and, most recently, Emily Simoness.

Caretakers abounded in the story as well. Women, usually, and men who knew every nook and cranny of the Sycamores, every berry patch (and when they'd ripen), the lineage and stories of all the cousins, worn paths through the fields down to hidden lake beaches, and how to make themselves known and heard in their own fashion. Aunts, uncles, and cousins who rang the dinner bell, who tirelessly maintained the structures, whose names—Mary, Dot, DD, Kay, Bill, Belle, John—were passed on to rooms, dwellings, jams, and children (myself included), and who loved the Farm and by so doing saved it over and over again in the everyday way.

In the story I was told (and lived), someone was always saving the Farm. It was a place worth saving. Someone was always caring for the Farm. This was a place—a family—deserving of care and of living remembrance.

What wasn't—and still largely isn't—represented in this narrative is the land's story prior to the Ryders, whose home this was before Eleazer built his shaded homestead on the hill. While instructing children to memorize their lineage and so many other details of the past, the Ryders have worked to forget who these sycamores may have sheltered before there was the Sycamores. In the family's 1995 bicentennial update, which included a detailed family tree, decades of photographs, the history of the family crest—yes, some of the *family's* story prior to the founding of the Farm was indeed sought out—, poems, and many fond recollections, there is but a brief mention of the Wappinger people who still resided in the area the year Colonel Stephen

was born on Ryder Farm. Neither the story of family nor Farm are much contextualized within the larger political tapestry of the communities they have long belonged to (e.g., settler colonists, the town of Southeast/Brewster, New York State, white Americans) beyond the (at times radical) activism and achievements of individual family members and grumblings about the influx of New York City folk to Putnam county and their impact on the tax rates. Instead, our story and the Farm's have rolled (and been steered) along mostly untethered to the larger stories to which they belong, generating temporal and spatial insulation from the outside. The feeling of stepping into a place "out of time" has become part of the Farm's appeal. Some of this changed or, at least, was challenged when the Farm went organic in the late seventies and was slowly connected—via my grandfather's efforts—to larger social movements and unorthodox agro-ecological ideologies and values. Similar changes and tensions have been unfolding since my cousin Emily began an artist residency program (which, as I write these words, sponsors my work) that occupies the Sycamores during all but three weeks of the season.

And, yet, even now as the Farm debates and prepares for another major transition—for the first time in recent memory the farmer will not be a family member—we (myself included) remain mired in a selectively idealized, past-oriented approach to safeguarding the future of family and Farm. To staving off change and death rather than being present with them as necessary, unavoidable, or unjust. As in environmental(ism) ethics and elsewhere, such an orientation relies on carefully curated memories and habitats alike that severely curtail transformative possibilities moving forward. It also prevents Farm and family from taking responsibility for our involvement in and the ways we have benefitted from past and ongoing inter-/intra-species injustices. We Ryders remember much, but we do not always remember well.

Both despite and because of this imperfect—and at times violent—land-based collective memory, the Farm is perhaps my best bet for personally practicing environmental palliation and remembrance in the time of global climate change. Not only because climate change will surely impact the flora, fauna (Ryders included), and ecology of the Farm, but because at the same time that the family is poised on the brink of its own internal transformation, we are uniquely positioned to consider other brinks upon which the Farm may be teetering, as well as those that have long since passed. The Ryder family has the opportunity to stop thinking of the Farm through a narrow quasi-apocalyptic lens—among other problematic normative framings—and acknowledge the endings/injustices both that have made its existence possible and that must be attended to down the road and at home. Furthermore, for reasons I will discuss at length in Part V, my work on the Farm may be my only option for actually practicing and not just supporting the work of environmental palliation and remembrance(rs).

Before I can consider what my own (family's) practices could/ought to look like, I will need to say more about the kind of work that environmental palliation and remembrance are. The bulk of this chapter is spent unpacking the overlapping ethical/political dimensions of palliation and remembrance as explored through narrative and practice. Laborious and often dangerous undertakings, both ethics are practiced by experts in community and on the land. Though focused on the dying/dead, palliation and remembrance are deeply intertwined with environmental ethics for those living under (post)apocalyptic conditions and, as such, the pursuit of transformative justice. This holism requires/enables their practitioners to draw upon temporalities, ecologies, and understandings of intergenerational ethics not entertained within the mainstream discourse. Palliation and remembrance, while deeply complementary, must also be considered for how they are distinct. The work of providing the unjustly dying with good/better deaths is not the same as

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keeping them alive in memory once they have passed. Furthermore, environmental ethics/justice for the dying cannot continue to be passed over in favor of attending to the dead. Remembrance cannot make up for the absence of palliation. Together, however, palliation and remembrance put unjust environmental deaths into context so that we can fully bear witness to them and ensure these ecological partners are known, felt, and cared for even after their lives have ended.

As detailed and defended in the previous chapter, my texts/teachers for this weaving come from (post)apocalyptic Indigenous, Afrofuturist, and/or feminist science fiction fantasy and the communities that produce these narratives. Taken together, these lived practices, stories, and theories offer rich insights regarding what is owed—and by whom—to the dying/dead of climate change and of environmental injustice more broadly. To conclude, I return (as ever) to the Farm. This is done partially to be transparent about the land/context where I hope to be able to practice environmental palliation and remembrance and—just as importantly—where I was in body and intention while crafting many of these words. The Farm also provides a helpful case study for considering strategies for amending communal memory and, relatedly, the ways in which the work of attending to the dead and the dying is interwoven with transformative environmental justice.

**II. My Texts/Teachers**

In this section I provide a brief but substantive overview of each of the narratives and practices from which I have learned alternative ways of relating/attending to the dead and the dying under conditions of environmental injustice. This is done so that when I call upon these sources to illustrate the various dimensions of palliation and remembrance in Section III, the contexts for these contributions are clear. To reiterate, I regard the narratives I engage with to be doing invaluable moral/political work. Through their powers of imaginative (re)description,

these science fiction fantasy stories/worlds offer necessary warnings and critiques of mainstream environmental practices and ethics. They also articulate and advance liberatory futurities. Instead of employing apocalyptic tropes comically or tragically, these narratives construct (post)apocalyptic worlds that imaginatively mirror our own without either throwing in the towel or reducing the scope of ethical action to pulling back from the brink or recreating the past in the future. In this way (and others) they are disruptive to the lifeways at the heart of climate change, Anthropocenic understandings of this phenomenon, and the colonizing temporalities that underlie both. The lived practices I rely upon grow out of and respond to the same (sorts of) world endings and injustices explored through these narratives. As such, they develop and embody strategies for attending to and surviving apocalypse that do not discount the dead and the dying or reduce them to abstractions. In addition to providing context for the descriptions, critiques, warnings, and (re)imaginings generated by science fiction fantasy, these practices serve as invaluable contrast, highlighting where life, art, and theory diverge. Together, the narratives and practices I engage with form a rich discourse of intergenerational environmental justice.

### A. Narratives

Leslie Marmon Silko's (Laguna Pueblo) (1977) novel *Ceremony* has gently guided me through much of this project. Exploring healing and loss through non-linear, place-based temporality, Silko's narrative unfolds as both a depiction and manifestation of ceremony for generations of Laguna Pueblo and their longstanding ecological relations, the dead and the dying included. Against a landscape as rife with Indigenous survivance as with the scars of colonialism (e.g., mine tailings, atomic bomb test sites, gendered/sexual violence, psychological/spiritual trauma, drought), the protagonist—a "battle fatigued" WWII veteran and Laguna "halfbreed" named Tayo—struggles to practice/accept healing across numerous temporal vectors. The

successful completion of his journey depends heavily upon Tayo's ability to mourn the dead, serve their memories, and find ways for them to live on through him, much of which he is only able to accomplish by carefully reestablishing relationships with the land. Silko frames the novel's antagonistic forces Tayo is up against through the ironic metaphor of white people's creation via Indigenous witchcraft, thereby innovatively highlighting the linkages between colonialism and environmental injustice without erasing, essentializing, or hyper-victimizing Indigenous peoples (Vizenor 2008). The climax of this conflict arrives via a temporal nexus— with multiple viable timelines—wherein, despite being lured near the Trinity Site and greatly tempted continue that violent legacy, Tayo must repudiate the logics of witchcraft/colonialism in order to complete the ceremony he has been working towards. By resisting the trap to become "another victim, a drunk Indian war veteran settling an old feud," and cede the story to the destroyers, Tayo succeeds in restoring himself, his people/home, and, in effect, the fate of the world (Silko 1977, 235). *Ceremony* is widely considered a masterpiece of Native American literature. In the author's hometown of Tucson, however, the novel has been banned from schools for its "controversial" depiction of settler colonialism (Tuck and Yang 2012).

The work of Nalo Hopkinson (Taino/Arawak and Afro-Caribbean descent) is also rich with powerful decolonial narratives that trouble linear temporality and monogenerational ethics. In fact, she is the co-editor of *So Long Been Dreaming: Postcolonial Science Fiction & Fantasy*, an anthology written exclusively by authors of color. About this editorial decision she says "To be a person of colour writing science fiction is to be under suspicion of having internalized one's colonization…In my hands, massa's tools don't dismantle massa's house…they build me a house of my own…I wanted to see what would happen if we handed out massa's tools and said, 'Go on; let's see what you build'" (Hopkinson and Mehan 2004, 7-9). For this project, I rely

upon two of Hopkinson's novels—*Brown Girl in the Ring* (1998) and *Midnight Robber* (2000). Set in a postapocalyptic Toronto (aka "the Burn") abandoned and cordoned off by the wealthy white elite and the Ontarian government, *Brown Girl in the Ring* follows a young mother (Ti-Jeanne) as she navigates this landscape in the footsteps of her grandmother (Gros-Jeanne), a preeminent healer and spirit worker. When the father of Ti-Jeanne's baby (Tony) is enlisted by Rudy—the Burn's most powerful crime boss and necromancer to boot—to harvest a heart suitable for the ailing Premier of Ontario, he turns to Ti-Jeanne and her grandmother for help. When their plan to sneak out of the city fails, Tony eventually murders Gros-Jeanne for her heart out of desperation. Ultimately, a grief-stricken but determined Ti-Jeanne chooses to embrace her connection to the spirits in order to confront Rudy, who she has learned is her grandfather and keeper of her undead mother's soul. Ti-Jeanne channels the Prince of the Cemetery—ancestral guardian of the crossroads—to defeat Rudy by liberating the dead souls he has enslaved/trapped. The novel concludes with the realization that the Ontarian Premier's transplant surgery has resulted in more than one kind of change of heart; Gros-Jeanne has taken over the Premier's body and has major plans for Toronto's revitalization.

*Midnight Robber*, a section of which was featured in *Walking the Clouds: An Anthology of Indigenous Science Fiction* edited by Grace Dillon (2012), similarly interweaves the legends, ontologies, and ecological philosophies of the Caribbean and Aboriginal Canada. The novel begins in the future on the planet of Toussaint, an alien world settled by the survivors of white imperialism and colonialism who left Earth to start anew and imbued with a global artificial intelligence. This world was not empty upon their arrival, however, and by the time our heroine Tan-Tan is born, all of the remaining the Indigenous inhabitants of Toussaint seem to have been relegated to a mirror dimension called New Half-Way Tree by the humans. The daughter of a

wealthy and powerful man who commits murder and is sentenced to exile, young Tan-Tan finds

herself on New Half-Way Tree when her father steals her away with him. Upon arrival, Tan-Tan

meets the Indigenous douen Chichibud, who guides them both to a human settlement and, years

later, takes a pregnant Tan-Tan to live with his family after she kills her abusive father. In the

village, Tan-Tan is trusted to learn and keep the secrets of the douen, who have successfully

managed to hide many aspects of their existence from the unwilling colonists. But willing or not,

most of the humans consider their Indigenous counterparts an inferior species, thus posing an

escalating threat to the douens and their way of life. Suffering from trauma and the foolishness of

adolescence, Tan-Tan convinces Chichibud's young daughter (Abitefa) to help her implement

vigilante justice throughout the human settlements as the Robber Queen, eventually leading

enemies back to the douen. In the end, the birth of her child (and sibling) forces Tan-Tan to

confront her external and internal demons. She rejoins human society but retains the mantle of

Robber Queen, working always to build the life that she and all the inhabitants of New Half-Way

Tree—douen, human, or otherwise—deserve.

    In "Griots of the Galaxy" Andrea Hairston (2004) also employs Afrofuturism and, more

specifically, reimagined West African storytellers (i.e., griots) in order to explore decolonial

ecologies. The short story, which was featured in Hopkinson's *So Long Been Dreaming*, follows

Axala, an alien body historian and serial amnesiac. Axala's people travel the galaxy seeking "the

stories behind all stories" by inhabiting newly dead organisms without any past knowledge of

their or their hosts' former lives, until they become too full of memories and return to the

mothership to deposit them (27). The griots' challenge is to live in the moment and to make

sense of these lives/stories without getting too attached. While "working the soul mines of

Earth," Axala discovers herself in the body of a rebel turned reluctant mercenary, who like/with

Axala is in the process of deciding to sabotage her assigned mission to destroy an ancient grove

of trees (24). The trees, as it turns out, have become inhabited by griots who have chosen to

make Earth their permanent home. Instead of extracting stories/souls and moving on to a new

planet, the griots have decided to return their bounty, contributing their own souls and futures to

Earth in the process. By choosing not to trigger the explosives, Axala is the last to join the grove,

thereby completing the relaying biomechanism broadcasting twenty thousand years' worth of

lives and becoming Axala of Earth.

Building off of the legacy of Silko, Hopkinson, Hairston, and others[52], N.K. Jemisin's

(2015-17) *Broken Earth* trilogy is a science fiction tour de force that heartbreakingly highlights

the intersections of gendered, racialized, colonial, heteronormative, and environmental

violence/injustice through the lens of Afrofuturism. These novels take place in a world of

tectonic upheaval literally held (mostly) together by an enslaved class of humans with the ability

to work magic on rock and earth. The efforts of these mages or "orogenes", however, is not

enough to hold back massive geologic ruptures that the "evil earth" manages to unleash every

few hundred years, triggering cataclysmic climate changes known as "fifth seasons." As a result,

the dominant society has been organized around making oneself and one's community as fit as

possible in preparation. The events of the trilogy being with the deliberate triggering of an

unprecedentedly devastating fifth season and a father's murder of his young son who is

discovered to be an orogene. The plot of the trilogy follows the boy's mother, Essun, in search of

her daughter, Nassun, who has been abducted by her father in the wake of the murder. Unfolding

across a vast supercontinent and various decades/millennia, Essun's and Nassun's stories force

[52] Most notably Octavia Butler, whose writing has also deeply influenced my own work. Though none of Butler's
narratives are among my primary texts for this chapter, I will be actively seeking out parallels between her work and
palliation/remembrance for future versions of this project. Butler's (2005) final novel *Fledgling*, which depicts a
ten-year-old Black girl as an amnesiac vampire navigating a postapocalyptic world, is a distinct contender.

readers to confront the repeated world endings experienced by enslaved and marginalized persons as well as the question of whether those whose worlds have ended repeatedly have any obligation, given the choice, to keep the larger world from burning. This choice put before several orogones throughout the novels, ultimately culminating in Nassun's decision to allow the scattered fragments of humanity remake the world together. The novels situate climate change as one among many sorts of apocalypses to unfold within/from complex assemblages of oppressive power structures. The world has ended just as surely when a young Essun takes the life of her own child rather than see him an enslaved orogene like she was as when the child's father (Alabaster) tears a continent asunder years later. And, so, when Essun discovers that the (sentient) Earth is just another parent whose child (the moon) has been ripped away from them, she fights tooth and nail for a solution that will see them both reunited with their offspring, for a future in which both can flourish.

Outside of her fictional work, Jemisin has an active presence on Twitter and is marvelously free with her critique of science fiction fantasy narratives that feed into and relies upon racist, sexist, colonial, and other oppressive tropes. This does not stop her from appreciating (some of the) stories/worlds she deems problematic. "Love doesn't have to be unquestioning acceptance," Jemisin tweets, "Critique is a form of love too" (Jemisin 2019). It is from this kind of loving place that I engage with the following (post)apocalyptic non-Indigenous, non-Afrofuturist feminist science fiction fantasy narratives. Each of these texts contains problematic or grey areas when it comes to worldbuilding, characterization, or message. Nonetheless, I would argue that they are imaginatively instructive for at least those of settler descent. Additionally, these narratives are helpful insofar as they reveal (potentially

incommensurable) tensions within the practice and theorization of feminist environmental ethics for the dead and the dying that should not be ignored.

Much praised and analyzed, Margaret Atwood's (2003-13) *MaddAddam* trilogy is perhaps the best known example of feminist climate fiction (e.g., Ullrich 2015, Traub 2018). Atwood's trilogy details the post-apocalyptic struggles of the last human(s) on earth following a plague engineered to wipe the species from the planet. Our protagonists' worlds are not small, however. Though frequent flashbacks we learn of the time before "the flood" in all its glorious, heartrending detail. The pre-flood world is both deeply disturbing and utterly recognizable. The rampant abuses of capitalism and technology, gendered and racialized violence/inequality, and increasingly destabilized climate all seem like the next logical incarnation of the environmental/gender/economic/racial injustice that abound in today's world. The plague may have decimated humanity, but Atwood makes clear that its development and implementation are but one strand in the apocalyptic web. Moreover, the plague is the least of the characters' concerns when it comes to surviving amidst and upon the detritus of a world torn asunder and extremely reluctant to die. As in the pre-flood world (though to/in varying degrees and ways), nothing about their survival is assured. The portions of the trilogy that most interest me for this project are those concerning the women of "God's Gardeners," a religious sect of monks and eco-hacktivists who cultivate new rituals and lifeways in preparation for the flood. To the very end, these novels leave the fate of these protagonists' efforts to (re)establish community uncomfortably uncertain. Without being saccharine, however, the trilogy vividly conveys how worthwhile and beautiful the work of transformation can be in spite of this. Carefully curated stories and rituals—both of/for those lost to pre-flood world and those living post-flood—— become increasingly important to the narrative and to (re)emerging communities.

Unfortunately, Atwood's trilogy also falls prey to some of the same problems that crop up in mainstream climate fiction. For one, there is very little (de)colonial awareness; Indigenous people simply are not present in either the pre- or post-flood worlds. Not only does this make Atwood's narratives descriptively inadequate, the futurities represented therein are thereby suspect. What does it mean for a ragtag bunch of former sex workers, anarchists, and hackers to survive alongside a new genetically engineered sapiens species and human-pig hybrids on the eastern seaboard of North America when (apparently) the Indigenous inhabitants of this place did not? Many readers of the MaddAddam trilogy will not even think to ask this question; the narratives do nothing to prompt it.

Unlike Atwood's novels, it is not immediately clear that the world of Naomi Novik's (2015) *Uprooted* qualifies as (post)apocalyptic. Right up until its climax, the novel appears to be a typical, albeit extremely imaginative and compelling, fairytale depicting the clash between good and evil in the form of a menacing Wood. If anything, the conflict between the Wood and human valley dwellers comes across as a pre-apocalyptic. After Agnieszka confronts her nemesis (the Wood-queen) and loses, however, she undertakes a dangerous journey into the heart of the Wood and uncovers its genesis. The Wood, as it turns out, had not always been bent on the destruction of Agnieszka's people. For ages, the valley's sole inhabitants were the Wood-people—those with the ability to live as both trees and humans. When Agnieszka's ancestors stumbled upon the valley, the Wood-queen had welcomed them, hoping that the two peoples could thrive together. But the newcomers, as the Wood-queen's sister tells Agnieska, "…were afraid. They wanted to live, they wanted to grow stronger, but they didn't want to change. They learned the wrong things" (411–12). They turned against the Wood. While her people decided that they would rather not remember anything than remember the wrong things and gave up their

human-selves forever, leaving their tree-selves at the mercy of their enemies, the Wood-queen refused to leave her people defenseless and gradually turned the wood and herself to ruin in pursuit of revenge. Upon learning the truth, Agnieszka offers to help the Wood-queen, who has lost the power to transition on her own, by sealing her in her sister's "heart-tree." The Wood-queen accepts, and the story concludes with Agnieszka taking up the mantle and powers of Baba Yaga in order to care for the Wood.

The line between colonist and colonizer is somewhat murkier, though much more thoughtfully explored, in Kameron Hurley's (2017) *The Stars are Legion*. A bizarrely brilliant space opera, Hurley's novel takes place in the outer reaches of a fictional star system populated by living "world-ships"—collectively known as the Legion—and their all-female inhabitants. The choice to populate the Legion exclusively with women could easily have backfired spectacularly. Instead of a simplistic utopic vision, however, *The Stars are Legion* offers a (literally) multilayered apocalyptic landscape that imaginatively mirrors the politics of climate change all while retaining its gendered realities despite the total absence of men. But, as Hurley's narrative suggests, on/in worlds where colonial logics produce violent, unsustainable forms of life/death, the politics and ecology of birth are no less disturbing. The accelerating decay of these living vessels/planets has led to perpetual conflict among the surface-dwelling humanoid "rulers" (and their armies) of various planetary clusters. Star-crossed lovers Zan and Jayd aim to put things to rights by obtaining access to a world-ship rumored to possess the power to regenerate itself and other worlds. The crucial problem--and the driving narrative force of the novel—is that Zan has recently/repeatedly been resurrected from the dead with (intentionally) little memory of her previous life/lives. After Jayd is married off to broker peace, Zan finds herself driven to the (living) core of her world-ship and undertakes a perilous journey back to the surface. Along the

way she encounters numerous allies and foes among the societies that call the various subterranean levels of the world-ship their home, many of which doubt the very existence of the surface Zan seeks. As she climbs, Zan gradually regains piecemeal memories that indicate this isn't the first time she's encountered the lower levels of the world-ship, causing her to doubt Jayd, their mission, and who she understands herself to be. In the end, Zan rejects the false dilemma to either erase her memory once again or reclaim all her old memories, choosing instead to embrace the woman she has become and work with Jayd one last time to remake the fabled world-ship and leave the Legion.

If anything, Jeannette Winterson's (2007) *The Stone Gods* is even more mind/world bending. In her review of the novel, Ursula Le Guin (2007) remarks, "It's odd to find characters in a science-fiction novel repeatedly announcing that they hate science fiction. I can only suppose that Jeanette Winterson is trying to keep her credits as a "literary" writer even as she openly commits genre. Surely she's noticed that everybody is writing science fiction now?" I share both Le Guin's sidelong disapproval and her appreciation of Winterson's imaginative environmental parable. *The Stone Gods*, like *Ceremony*, is a challenging book to encapsulate in a brief paragraph. Both narratives intentionally resist linear temporality and storytelling. To that dynamic Winterson adds metaphysical mobius strips that result in characters from some storylines/worlds ending up in notebooks that characters in other storylines/worlds stumble across on the Tube. Suffice it to say that *The Stone Gods* weaves together the stories of multiple worlds—planetary and otherwise—at the "end" of ecological collapse, each highlighting different dystopic elements and politics. Perhaps even more interestingly, the central characters—a pair of doomed lovers—seem to transcend space/time as well. Eventually, we learn that both the story of the lovers and environmental apocalypse are (probably) repeating

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across planets and ecosystems. The possibility to disrupt this/these cycle/s exists, but the end of the novel leaves it vague (in my mind) as to whether or not that mission was a success.

And though there are other science fiction fantasy narratives that inform my analysis/weaving in this chapter—e.g., the *Abhorsen* (Nix 1995-2003) trilogies, *Icarus Descending* (Hand 1993), the *Parable* duet (Butler 1993, 1998), *Everfair* (Shawl 2016)—these are the ones that serve as my primary texts regarding palliation and remembrance. Part of this decision is strategic—at this stage in my project to draw attention to the practice and theory of palliation and remembrance, having too many texts in the kitchen is as much a threat as having too few. My analysis is only possible through weaving these examples together, but it would be easy for the richness of these narratives to overwhelm the philosophy. (This is another reason I have chosen to outline their story arcs and broader politics in detail prior to Section III.) The primary texts I have selected are those that most obviously and innovatively grapple with suffering, loss, memory, death, and dying. In the future, I hope to find—and perhaps even write—more such narratives, but, for now, these will more than do.

## B. Lived Practices

Of course, for me to claim that certain science fiction fantasy texts do more than *imagine* environmental ethics/justice for the dead and the dying *but* ignore what/whose practices they may be describing or *re*imagining would be exceedingly odd, as well as politically problematic.[53] Just because Wild Salmon Center, MEMO, or even Remembrance Day for Lost Species are not practicing the kinds of ethics/politics that get depicted in my primary narratives does not mean that no one has been or is currently invested in environmental palliation and remembrance. The lived practices I flesh out in this section are those, like my primary narrative sources, that unfold

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[53] Please refer back to Chapter 2 for more on this point.

from the knowledge that many and much has/have been lost but that the futurities available are more expansive than generally believed. These instances of environmental ethics for the dead and dying *are* and/or belong to endeavors to cope with and overcome environmental injustice that has compounded and mutated over generations. Such practitioners often possess/wield both deep outrage and deep empathy. They skillfully provide care to more than the living and the more than human. Some operate from a place of exploring what can be done when restoration fails or is found to be beyond reach. Many are explicitly organized through memory or ceremony. In some cases, the dead/dying are front and center. For others, the dead are among the varied agents and recipients of intergenerational healing and transformation. All are inspiring.

One overt practice of public remembrance that unfolded as this project was coming together was that of the orca mother Tahlequah's seventeen-day-long public mourning of her dead calf coupled with the support she garnered from her pod, local researchers, and many human onlookers internationally. Tahlequah, also known as J35 by researchers, is one of seventy-five southern-resident orcas in the Pacific Northwest, a community which has lost close to two thirds of its calves in recent years (Mapes 2018). The orcas' diminished reproductive capacity has been attributed to dwindling salmon numbers. After the death of her infant less than an hour after their birth, Tahlequah repeatedly raised the calf to the surface with her rostrum (as new orca mothers commonly do given that their infants do not yet have enough blubber to float), eventually choosing to balance the body on her head or fin. Every time her child slipped into the water, Tahlequah would take several deep breaths and dive deep to retrieve them. Lagging behind her pod, the other orcas took turns swimming alongside Tahlequah and, after the first week, carrying the calf so that she could occasionally hunt.  Researchers familiar with this pod kept their own around the clock vigil keeping other boats away and remarking, "We are

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respectfully monitoring from a distance, we are committed, we are here to help her through this."

To many with and without cetacean expertise it was clear that Tahlequah was a mother calling

public and/or human attention to her loss, with one researcher even commenting, "Maybe this is

her protest. I told the governor it was going to happen. More and more will happen. We are

losing them…The whales are not going to stand for it" (Mapes 2018). Tahlequah and her pod

continued the vigil for over two weeks, sparking new debate about marine stewardship in the

region.

 The salmon that orca whales and so many others rely upon receive attention and

remembrance of their own from Lee Maracle (Sto:lo). In her book *Memory Serves*, Maracle

(2015) not only situates salmon as the hub of Salish memory but recounts/practices the work of

Salish "rememberers." The eponymous essay/oratory "Memory Serves" bears witness to Salish

memory work while simultaneously illustrating how Maracle herself employs these practices

with/for her daughter, now deceased mother, and other Indigenous women. Through her

masterful prose we encounter emotional, spiritual, and embodied memory furthering numerous

projects of great significance to the Salish people, e.g., decolonization, intergenerational healing,

and survivance. Though the entire book is extremely attentive to ecological and interspecies

politics, Maracle's "Salmon as the Hub of Salish Memory" centers the more than human in

memory work and, noncoincidentally, webs of environmental (in)justice. Highlighting crucial

linkages between Pacific salmon suicides in 2001 and the 9/11 suicide attacks, her essay explores

the necessity and strengths of Salish remembrance especially in comparison to Western historical

inquiry.

 Further up the coast, the plight of marine interspecies partners(hips) also feature centrally

in Inupiaq climate adaptation efforts. With whales/whaling located squarely at the center of

coastal Inupiaq lifeways, these communities are working hard to maintain as well as reimagine

their relationships with migrating whales—and other ecological partners reeling from climate

change—through adaptive drumming practices and other innovative expressions. Here I rely

largely upon the field research of cultural geographer and ethnomusicologist Chie Sakakibara,

whose careful analysis of Inupiaq drumming practices prominently features Indigenous voices.

Her article "'No Whale, No Music:' Inupiaq Drumming and Global Warming" (Sakakibara

2009) offers an account of Inupiaq drumming and whaling that resists static/offensive

understandings of Indigenous cultures and their capacity to cope with climate change. Her

collaborative narrative of how Inupiaq whaling and music (i.e., drumming) came to be so

inextricably linked is particularly rich. Though the reduced prevalence and increased

unpredictability of both bowhead whales and artic sea ice have had severely disruptive and even

tragic consequences for both humans and bowheads, Inupiaq communities are finding new ways

to drum for and relate to whales. Likewise, Inupiaq-Inuit poet dg nanouk okpik explores these

ecological and cultural realities in her book *Corpse Whale* (2012), an innovative rendering of

Inupiaq-whale relationships set against a backdrop of ruptured oil pipelines, receding sea ice,

and, of course, dead/dying whales.

Like Maracle and okpik, in *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific
Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants* (2013) Robin Wall Kimmerer (Potawatomi) also deftly

interweaves the work of recounting and co-creating Indigenous environmental philosophy for the

dead and the dying. An environmental biologist with scientific expertise cultivated from both

Indigenous and Western traditions, Kimmerer, like Maracle, is keenly interested in the

relationship between memory, ceremony, and the land. Though she comments on plight of

Pacific salmon and other ecological entanglements—both flourishing and suffering—throughout

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Turtle Island, *Braiding Sweetgrass* locates its epistemology on the land(s) the author knows/loves best, i.e., those of Great Lakes and the Northeast. One place to receive particular attention is Onondaga Lake, which when Kimmerer first heard of it was already "long past saving" (322). Once a jewel under the care of the Onondaga Nation, a member of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, Onondaga Lake today is the site of nine superfund sites. In addition to poisoning the lake, settler industries (e.g., mineral extraction, chemical manufacturing) also eventually contaminated the well-water on the reduced lands allotted to the Onondaga Nation. Kimmerer explores the origins of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy—itself a response to inter- and intraspecies violence—to highlight the historical role of the Onondaga and the injustice unfolding from colonization, as well as to offer a way forward. And though the Onondaga's land rights action suit was dismissed by New York State, Kimmerer looks to the Nation's ongoing efforts and those of their local settler allies for lessons about how to relate to lands irrevocably altered.

The work that Terry Tempest Williams' (1991) relays/accomplishes through *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place* feels like the kind of practice that Kimmerer had in mind when she writes of "becoming Indigenous" to a place (9, 207). Though she mostly neglects the colonial history of Salt Lake City and the peoples—Goshute and Eastern Shoshone[54]—who have lived in the valley since long before the arrival of the Mormons, Williams richly attends to the loss of Utah's wetlands and her family's multigenerational relationships with the beings—in particular birds—who make these habitats their year-round or migratory homes. Front and center are the flooding of the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge paralleled by her mother's slow demise from breast cancer. Williams becomes midwife at these deaths and others; almost all the women

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[54] (Native Land 2018)

in her family were undergoing mastectomies and/or dying of breast cancer. These deaths initially appear detached from each other and broader environmental politics/policies until the narrative shifts and Williams begins to connect—for herself and the reader—these tragedies to the larger stories of environmental "management," shifts in climate, and nuclear testing in the Southwest. Ultimately, Williams decides that one legacy she can choose not to inherit from her Mormon foremothers is that of obedient complacency. She puts her body and her pen to work to attend to and resist environmental injustices on the lands she and her family call home. With her closing essay—"The Clan of One-Breasted Women"—Williams (1991) relies in part upon a song "gifted" from Shoshoni elders with whom (and upon whose land) she is protesting to ground her own and other (presumably settler) women's praxis (287). Williams more recent environmental writings[55] work harder to contextualize collaboration and conflict between settler environmentalists/ism and Indigenous peoples.

These are precisely the sort of contentious, unjust histories and dynamics that those fighting to erect memorials to slavery have sought to make impossible to forget. In contrast with the memorials (e.g., MEMO) described in Chapter 1, these monuments—such as the one pursued by Abigail Jordan in Savannah, Georgia—not only spring from communities/peoples suffering environmental injustice but are designed to be lodged at the heart of everyday life. They are also intended as sites of counter-memory (Alderman 2010). If it seems strange to include such monuments in project grappling with the dead and the dying of climate change, it is likely because mainstream environmentalism rarely understands slavery—though less so its legacy—in terms of environmental (in)justice. This can be explained, at least in part, by environmentalists' tendency to neglect (or vilify) agricultural ecosystems (Thompson 2010) as well as by their

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[55] E.g., *The Hour of Land: A Personal Topography of America's National Parks*, in which Williams (2016) describes the National Parks System not in the romanticized terms of wilderness but as deeply contested colonial sites.

fraught relationship with understanding environmental harms intersectionally when doing so complicates human/species identity (as discussed in Chapter 1). But not only are the politics and geographies of transatlantic slavery crucial for understanding colonization and climate change, movements to memorialize slavery belong to a long tradition of black communities practicing land work and memory work together (Tuck and Yang 2012, Yusoff 2018)

The Black Land Project (2019), for example, seeks to "identify and amplify the current critical dialogues surrounding the relationship between Black people and land." In addition to providing necessary context for understanding and attending to environmental racism, the stories gathered by the Project help reimagine Black relationships to land and explore the "powerful traditions of resourcefulness, resilience and regeneration" this work possible. Similarly, Tamara Butler (2019a) created The BlackGirlLand Project in 2015 "as an intellectual endeavor to document Black women's connections to nature, Southern land and rural spaces." BlackGirlLand—with its subtitle of "Black Women. Seeking. Land. Memory"—aims to preserve histories by interviewing the women living on and responsible for caring for farmland. Butler conducts her research on the South Carolina and Georgia Sea Islands, focusing on Black rural women's root-working methodologies, storytelling practices, and maintenance of "sites" of memory. While writing this chapter, I was fortunate to hear Dr. Butler (2019b) present her forthcoming book project *Rooted Literacies: Black Women's Placemaking and Memory Work*, the publication of which I eagerly await.

My engagement with the practices outlined in this section will continue to evolve as my understanding of them deepens. Ideally, I would be more tangibly and directly beholden to these practitioners and their communities. This kind of accountability, however, requires the forging of reciprocal relationships that cannot be rushed and often require geographic proximity. For this

reason, I currently rely upon texts such as *Memory Serves*, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, and *Refuge* which both recount and model environmental practices for attending to the dead/dying, as well as upon researchers like Sakakibara and Butler who conduct their own careful field work and analysis. The cultivation of relationships with practitioners of palliation and remembrance will be a vital component of my work moving forward. Thus (as discussed in Chapter 2), the conclusions I draw from these stories/practices ought to be regarded as provisional and must be highly responsive to critiques from those who know them best.

### III. Weaving Together Story and Practice

Lee Maracle (2015, 52) explains, "Before we can remember, we need to be able to recognize value." The initial work that these narratives and practices undertake is (re)descriptive. They recognize that deaths/losses have occurred or are occurring *and* that they ought to be regarded in context as tragic, wrongful, or unjust. Sometimes this is established quite directly. Maracle (52-3) herself is particularly blunt:

> Salish people know that the homelands of the salmon have been the object of chronic invasion by fisheries, pulp and paper mills, the forest industry, and all manner of toxic dumping…Would a comparative examination of habitat degradation and human degradation help us understand better the suicidal options taken by fish and humans? I think it would…In the Salish cultural worldview salmon and humans are not separate. The suicide of sockeye is an event worthy of record, worthy of memory, and therefore worthy of study. Both of these events are tied to a single social and physical degradation of human and salmon habitat.

Winterson's (2012) expository dialogue is similarly straightforward, with *The Stone Gods'* protagonist resisting her boss's request to publicly describe their planet as "evolving in a way that is hostile to human life" rather than as dying. Her response, "OK, so it's the planet's fault. We didn't do anything, did we? Just fucked it to death and kicked it when it wouldn't get up" (8). Atwood (2009, 2013) weaves (re)descriptions of the dead into the everyday practices of God's Gardeners, whose saints' days and hymns

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honor "martyrs" like Dian Fossey and various endangered or extinct species. Later, these species become the codenames of Gardeners in their hacktivist work.

Other texts, like *Refuge* (Williams 1991) and *Uprooted* (Novik 2015), build to these revelations. Williams relays concerns to a cousin, "This cannot be a coincidence can it? Three women in one family unrelated by blood, all contract cancer within months of each other…What I do know is that I resent so much being asked of the women and so little being asked of the men…I'm scared for you and me" (261). She, alongside her reader, does not uncover the open secret of the family's proximity to nuclear test sites during the Cold War until very late in the manuscript, and Williams' subsequent rage succeeds in reframing the deaths we have become intimately familiar with throughout her memoir. Novik's reveal of the Wood Queen as sole protector/avenger of her people is perhaps even more dramatic. The scene in which the Queen recounts her story of imprisonment and eventual escape back to the Wood only to have her transformation (into tree form) thwarted by attacking humans is particularly effective at relocating villainy. "I stopped them," she explains, "I had to stop them…They burned the trees…They cut them down. They will always cut them down. They come and go like seasons, the winter that gives no thought to the spring" (219). Silko's (1977, 125) (re)description of white people as the culmination of Indigenous witches' attempts to one up each other's aberrant creations is in the same vein. Their spell calls into being humans who will kill for the witches without even knowing it:

> They see no life
> When they look
> they see only objects.
> The world is dead for them
> the trees and rivers are not alive
> the mountains and stones are not alive.

<div align="center">
The deer and bear are objects
They see no life.
</div>

Whether by positive or negative example, these authors make abundantly clear that we ought to be attending to the dead/dying of more beings and in more ways than is widely accepted and practiced.

Indeed, alongside their (re)descriptions of the dead/dying in the past/present, these narratives and practices demonstrate that what we do in the face of such death, loss, and suffering matters deeply. It is Tayo's heartbreaking refusal to participate in death in the wrong ways that ultimately enables him to foil the witches and complete the ceremony, even though it means accepting the violent fate of his former friend. Though fictional protagonists and practitioners alike may sometimes ask—"In the face of blind injustice, how do we continue? How do we live our responsibility for healing?" (Kimmerer 2013, 322)—, they do not refuse the work. They keep drumming (Sakakibara 2009) or orating (Hopkinson 2000, Maracle 2015) or recovering memories (Butler 2007, Hurley 2017, Butler 2019b), even when what needs doing seems/is impossible. In such moments and for such work, we cannot afford to be afraid of the dying and the dead, as Chichibud tells Tan-Tan in *Midnight Robber* (Hopkinson 2000). Long observation has taught him that "tallpeople" generally avoid dealing with—and, therefore, are largely ignorant of—dying/death (102). In my own life, the first time I was midwife to someone's death I remember feeling rage (as well as grief) at how poorly my communities had prepared me for the realities of dying. "Look for a long time at that which pleases you, and a longer time at that which gives you pain," quotes[56] Nisi Shawl (2016) in her epigraph for *Everfair*. This particular Afrofuturist novel practices remembrance in an unusual, highly creative way—by looking backwards at what could have been. Specifically, Shawl imagines what might

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[56] This quote is attributed to Colette (Shawl 2016).

have happened if the Congo Free State had developed dirigible technology to resist and, eventually, expel colonial powers. And, yet, even here the need for ethical theory and practices for navigating dying, death, and transformation is intensely felt.

In this section, I build upon these (re)descriptions of death/dying to dig deeper into the ethical/political work that these texts (collectively) argue must accompany them. My analysis is organized through the dual lenses of palliation for the dying and remembrance for the dead, though surely there are a plurality of ways to be gleaned from these narratives and practices for engaging the dead and the dying. I have endeavored to arrange the various assemblages of the ethical dimensions of palliation and remembrance as coherently as possible. There is, however, a stickiness inherent to this process not unlike working with spun sugar; eventually you just have to accept the mess as part of your methodology. After all, these are overlapping ethics, theoretically and practically. Remembrance and mourning can—and often do—begin prior to death, and a death may be eased long after the moment of someone's passing. Nevertheless, there are important ways in which palliation and remembrance are distinct practices, and in what follows I will focus on each individually before exploring them further through their convergences.

### A. Palliation

Through these texts, the practice of palliation gets framed as that which those dying or departing rarely receive but the very least that they deserve. "When most people had given up on the Refuge, saying the birds were gone, I was drawn further into its essence. In the same way that when someone is dying many retreat, I chose to stay," Williams (1991, 4, 52-3) writes of her work in/with the wetlands at beginning of her memoir. The refusal to neglect our ecological partners even as they are/may be leaving us is also starkly apparent in the efforts of coastal

Inupiaq communities to find new ways to drum for/with bowhead whales (Sakakibara 2009). Sometimes, as with *Icarus Descending* (Hand 1993)—a novel in which the mutant/cyborg rebellion turns out to have been organized to abandon and destroy Earth rather than to take back or heal it—, apocalyptic narratives implore us not to abandon the dying by imaginatively mirroring the injustice of doing so on a planetary scale.[57] It is precisely this cycle of abandonment (and the extractive lifeways that "necessitate" it) that *The Stone Gods* is so keen to break. And though Winterson (2008) leaves much about the future uncertain, she makes a point of having her protagonists attend closely to the intimacies of dying when others refuse. Other stories, e.g., *Brown Girl in the Ring* (Hopkinson 1998), construct their entire narrative endgame around the liberation of those suffering in limbo whose only other option is to move fully into death.

Indeed, the *work* of palliation frequently involves easing the suffering of (the) dying. Often it is the dying itself that is painful. Williams (1991) heartbreakingly depicts the physically and emotionally laborious processes of managing her mother's painful death from cancer as well as the suffering of the birds she finds in the wetlands who are beyond rehabilitation. "Death is no longer what I imagined it to be," Williams writes, "Death is earthy like birth, like sex, full of smells and sounds and bodily fluids. It is a confluence of evanescence and flesh" (219). When Ti-Jeanne's affinity with Legbara grants her the disturbing ability to see the manner of people's death, her grandmother urges her not to squander this gift and tells her, "It mean you could ease people passing, light the way for them. For them to cross over from this world or the next" (Hopkinson 1998,103). By freeing the souls trapped in her grandfather's bloodthirsty duppy bowl, Ti-Jeanne ends the agonizing servitude of her mother and countless others. Similarly, after

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[57] And hence the reason why *Icarus Descending* is not one of my primary texts—it offers more in the way of what not to do than it does positive examples of how to attend to the dead and the dying.

taking up the mantle of Baba Yaga[58] much of Agnieszka's caretaking of the Wood involves

attending to debilitating agony of both the Wood-Queen and the trees she had bewitched by

sealing humans within their trunks to animate them. With the help of the Wood-Queen's sister,

Agnieszka learns how to transition a select few—including the Wood-Queen—into "dreaming."

Many trees, however, have been too long besieged by the madness of the humans trapped within

them. "Drawing the water out of them and giving them to the fire was the gentlest way I'd found

to set them free," Agnieszka determines, "It still felt like killing someone, every time, although I

knew it was better than leaving them trapped and lingering. The grey sorrow of it stayed with me

afterwards" (Novik 2015, 427).

For palliation is never easy, and not just because practicing it is a messy, laborious

undertaking often fraught with the grief that accompanies untimely loss. In the (con)texts that I

call upon, palliation is being practiced as the result of and under conditions of environmental

injustice. Practitioners (both fictional and nonfictional) bear the burden of knowing that those

under their care should not have to suffer and, ultimately, die in this way at this time. Thus, in

addition to the kinds of emotional labor that end-of-life care calls for under more "ideal"

circumstances, there is also the recognition and/or experience of moral failure to contend with.

Palliation may be the least that the dying deserve, but those who practice palliation in the

(post)apocalypse are keenly aware that the dying deserve more than diminished suffering and

(hopefully) a good/better death.[59] The moral failure of palliation is particularly pronounced when

death on one's own terms is chosen as the preferred alternative to a worse/living death. This

dynamic is certainly present in Agnieszka's work, but it is developed with far more political and

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[58] In Slavic folklore Baba Yaga is known as a powerful witch or death/nature deity who was (and to some extent sill
is) representative of the Crone aspect of the Goddess. Crones are commonly associated with endings,
transformations, and death, as well as numerous other responsibilities that require deep wisdom.
[59] More on this point in a moment.

emotional nuance in the Afrofuturist narratives of Hopkinson (1998, 2000) and Jemisin (2015-17). Rooted in the narratives and lived realities of Black and Indigenous parents who chose to end their children's lives rather than risk their (re)enslavement, Afrofuturism redescribes such deaths *in part* by employing a palliative lens. In *Midnight Robber*, for example, when Tan-Tan and Abitefa expose the douen's secret enclave to human discovery, the community chooses to cut down the massive "daddy tree" in/upon/with whom they made their home for generations instead of letting them fall into human hands. The *Broken Earth* trilogy takes up this devastating narrative/trope as one of its central themes through Essun's story. This is not to say that these or other Afrofuturist texts are uncomplicatedly representing or "advancing" palliation as such. In fact, the climax of Jemisin's trilogy revolves around Essun's refusal to take the life of her remaining child even if it means the destruction of the world, choosing instead to sacrifice her own (human) life to save Nassun, the Evil Earth, and many others besides. However, it feels dishonest to excise the most tragic instances of palliation from the overall narrative of how these science fiction texts go about (re)describing this practice/ethical dimension. The choice to end the lives of those under one's care to preempt further or worse suffering cannot be easily categorized as positive or negative examples of palliation. Rather, this dynamic is an important component of what it means to understand palliation as both a response to and instantiation of unavoidable moral failure.

In general, the idea/practice of "choosing" death highlights a larger tension within the discourse of palliation, especially as it relates to environmental and political transformation. In both the fictional and real world(s) there is considerable disagreement regarding how much facilitation of dying/death is appropriate or ethical. While figures like *Icarus Descending*'s Metatron—i.e., the rebellion leader who builds an "ark" and, when the time is ripe, commands

that his followers to "harvest what remains of this poison earth and leave it to burned clean…freed from its suffering" (329, 331)—are not to be lauded or emulated, the idea of unearthing and burning out corruption and injustice is readily entertained. From Agnieszka's incineration of the bewitched heart-trees to Jemisin's orogene triggered tectonic cataclysm, the message that proactively facilitating endings/deaths may be acceptable (perhaps even necessary) under the right conditions comes through clearly. Sussing out and navigating the complexities of such palliative work—in either narrative or practice—requires eco-politics that are nuanced and contextually informed. In *Midnight Robber*, the human inhabitants of New Half-Way Tree bring with them all sorts of hitchhikers when pushed through the dimensional veil. Some manifest as "invasive" species (e.g., grains, fruits, livestock). Interestingly, however, the douen choose not to eradicate these new lifeforms across the board. Instead, they work to incorporate these beings into native ecosystems and develop relationships with them such that they can leverage more power amongst the humans. Kimmerer writes, "To most people, an invasive species represents losses in a landscape, the empty spaces to be filled by something else. To those who carry the responsibility of an ancient relationship, the empty niche means empty hands and a hole in the collective heart" (150). At the same time, she considers the contrast between plantain and kudzu, both relative newcomers to Turtle Island. While the plantain has worked with others to equitably integrate and become "naturalized," kudzu is (thus far) only interested in colonizing. Neither Hopkinson nor Kimmerer outline universal guidelines for dealing with so-called invasive species, focusing instead upon the relational/ecological dynamics that represent tragedy and success under particular circumstances. Both seem keenly aware of the potential for palliation to go too far under the guise of something like past-oriented environmentalism. That there are no easy answers on offer when it comes to facilitating (what we might call) adaptive palliation is

another reminder that this will never be a practice that feels uncomplicatedly good (or bad), nor one that always allows us to walk away with our hands clean.

Ultimately, palliation should not be regarded as a form of glorified euthanasia but as a practice geared towards providing good or better deaths for particular entities in specific circumstances of injustice. Easing suffering can be an important part of this work, but much more is often required. Here it is not my intention to settle some larger question about what it means to have a Good Death. In addition to not striking me as a particularly fruitful endeavor, none of the narratives or practitioners I engage with are attempting to formulate an answer to this query. Instead, I would conclude this section by highlighting *some* of the primary themes that occur within this literature when it comes to dying well under (post)apocalyptic conditions. For one, both those receiving and providing palliation reflect that it is important for the dying to feel seen and cared for. Holding her dying compatriot, Axala pours out,

> "Jay Silver Feather…Your great-grandfather was a Seminole, a black Indian, and he told you swamp stories, about stealing slaves into freedom, hiding with trees, making new world communities from the swamps to…across the border, and never letting white folks catch you at anything. He called you his Silver Feather, because you had a spirit that nobody could beat down. I remember your stories, even if I didn't live them. Your spirit is safe with me" (Hairston 2004, 41).

Maintaining relationships through (and beyond) death is likewise regarded as part of dying well. For instance, even though bowhead whales may no longer be capable providing the Inupiaq with their bodies and their songs, some Inupiaq are working to reverse the relationship and give music back to the whales through the drumming that once called them to whalers (Sakakibara 2009). Though this crucial ecological/cultural partner may leave the Inupiaq, the relationship will be maintained in some form. Relatedly, another component of palliation is receiving assurance that your partners and loved ones will be well cared for. As Toby (a somewhat reluctant God's Gardner) tends to her dying mentor, Pilar reminds her to inform the bees of her death and asks

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Toby to take over the care of the hives; "[Toby] went to tell the bees. She felt like an idiot doing it, but she'd promised. She remembered that it wasn't enough just to think at them: you had to say the words out loud. Bees were the messengers between this world and the other worlds, Pilar had said. Between the living and the dead. They carried the Word made air" (Atwood 2009, 180).

Perhaps the most common theme among various practitioners and narratives is that dying well requires the acknowledgement of death from those offering or providing palliation. Williams' struggle to do just this is deeply illustrative, "I have refused to believe that Mother will die. And by denying her cancer, even her death, I deny her life. Denial stops us from listening. I cannot hear what Mother is saying. I can only hear what I want…We had wanted everything back to its original shape. We had wanted a cure for Mother for ourselves, so we could get on with our lives. What we had forgotten was that she was living hers" (68, 75-6). Williams' mother reminds her that "to keep hoping for life in the midst of letting go is to rob [her] of the moment [she is] in" (161). Only after Williams acknowledges that her mother is in fact dying can she fully become midwife to her death. At the same time, in Williams' writing and elsewhere there is a pronounced tension between the responsibility to acknowledge (the) dying and the danger of giving up too soon. Feeling this pull is also an integral part of practicing palliation, especially for the unjustly dying/departing; this is one tension that cannot and should not be resolved.[60]

## B. Remembrance

The bounds and demands of environmental justice do not terminate with/in death. As discussed in Chapter One, death does not dissolve our relationships with nor obligations to our

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[60] I will revisit this tension in my conclusion.

ecological partners, particularly when those deaths result from environmental injustice. Palliation for the dying must therefore be followed up by ethical praxis for and with the dead. In the texts I draw upon, such endeavors commonly get framed as memory work or, as I mostly refer to this ethical dimension/practice, remembrance. In addition to bolstering certain elements of palliation such as the caretaking of relations(hips), remembrance is what (at least) the unjustly dead are owed. Regarding the Salish practice/theory of remembrance Maracle (2014, 58) writes, "All living beings on earth have a place in our memory. This memory does not narrow the subject to be remembered, e.g., human or fish, but rather our concepts deploy different means to remember, analyze and recall. Salmon is at the hub of our memory wheel." In her poem "For the Spirits-Who-Have-Not-Yet-Rounded-the-Bend," okpik (2012, 73) describes herself as both aquatic creature and human woman, "dancing in the midnight sun not for law, or man, but for whale and blood." Though remembrance manifests in a variety of ways depending upon who is practicing it, for whom, and in what contexts, the importance of remembering well in the (post)apocalypse is evident in/through science fiction narratives and lived practices alike. How we remember those who die or depart as the result of environmental injustice matters deeply under such conditions, both to the dead and—as I will discuss in the next section—to the living and those yet-to-be. This section considers several key aspects of remembrance as developed and/or demonstrated by my fictional and nonfictional interlocutors.

Picking up the threads from the first chapter, I want to be clear that although remembrance is more than memorial, its practice may involve physical objects and/or demand to take up space. Perhaps the most straightforward example of memory work manifesting (in part) through memorial is that of the monument that Abigail Jordan fought to have erected in Savannah, Georgia to honor the enslaved. A mechanism for challenging not only white erasures

of slavery in Savannah but also the conventional way that Black history had been celebrated within her own community, Jordan sought to make slavery a visible part of Savannah's everyday landscape (Alderman 2010). In her own words, "Over five million visitors will walk [this year] on the unmarked cobblestones of River Street with no understanding of the [slave] hands that laid them or of the notorious [slave] ships that docked at River Street two centuries ago. No marker acknowledging the profound contributions of slaves exists on the riverfront or anywhere else in Savannah" (95). By contrast, there were forty-two monuments to the Confederacy scattered throughout the city at that time (Savannah Morning News 2019). Jordan and her supporters envisioned the monument as a somber Black family in modern dress with broken chains at their feet, below whom would be inscribed Maya Angelou's words: "We were stolen, sold and bought together from the African continent. We got on the slave ships together. We lay back to belly in the holds of the slave ships in each other's excrement and urine together, sometimes died together, and our lifeless bodies thrown overboard together" (96). Immensely controversial, the statue was eventually installed in 2002 (after a decade of public debate) along the Savannah riverfront with minor modifications.[61] Sites of (counter)memory such as Jordan's are not designed to be comfortable or kept out of the way (Alderman 2010). Rather, they are intended as daily reminders of the injustice of slavery, its afterlives, and those who have died (and continue to live) in its wake (Sharpe 2016).[62] Additionally, such monuments are consciously developed as part of larger community efforts to practice remembrance for slavery more broadly, e.g., in school curricula, through policy work, in art and activism, etc.

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[61] More on the controversy and these modifications in a moment.

[62] The language of "the wake" comes from the work of Christina Sharpe (2016) in her excellent book *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*, which will be engaged more fully in future versions of this project.

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Along a similar vein, Kimmerer (2013) remarks that she hopes the waste beds of Onondaga Lake never disappear entirely. "We need them to remind us what we are capable of. We have an opportunity to learn from them," she reflects (333). While out on the lake, Kimmerer observes and imagines various other tableaus as well, sites that already/would depict various kinds of relationships to the land beyond that of land as capital or property. Through her description of habitats embodying land as teacher, as healer, as responsibility, as sacred, and as community, Kimmerer (literally and figuratively) situates physical remembrance for injustice and the dead alongside manifestations of the motivational and aspirational. Other texts demonstrate that sites of remembrance need not always be disturbing or even grief-stricken, especially when maintained by and for those communities to whom the dead/departed most closely belong. In her work with Black women on Johns Island, Tamara Butler (2019b) encounters the convergence of place- and memory-making through the storied mapping of the "used-to-be." The root-workers she interviews "conjure up" sites of remembrance by (re)building memories of Black land and spaces even when they no longer exist. But rather than simply lament those/that lost to the past, their memory work is undertaken primarily with healing and sustenance in mind.

For just as remembrance is more than symbolic memorial, its practice encompasses far more than mourning, even insofar as remembrance involves affective work. As Kimmerer (2013, 327) remarks, although loving the land may necessarily involve grieving, "it is not enough to weep for our lost landscapes; we have to put our hands in the earth to make ourselves whole again." Importantly, she does not restrict "ourselves" to either the human or the living. A denizen of one of Hurley's (2017, 328) dying world-ships personalizes this position, "I once believed that all we were is the sum of our memories…but in this place, I found that it isn't the memories that made us; it is what we decided to do with them. I tried to build a life down there, in the dark,

based on the pain I've endured. But you can't do that, can you? You have to…remake it. Transform." In fact, many of the characters living the (post)apocalypse learn the hard way that grief can be a serious impediment to both survival and doing right by the victims of injustice, living or dead. When mourning acquires a past-orientation so complete that mourners refuse to move forward, full acknowledgment of death and, therefore, remembrance for the dead are precluded.

This is not, however, to discount the important work being done with ecological grief (e.g., Askland and Bunn 2018, Cunsolo and Ellis 2018). Though solastagia—i.e., the place-based distress caused by environmental change—manifests in many of the texts I draw upon, it is often overlooked within environmental literatures that tend to focus on guilty grief. Also described as "a form of homesickness while still in place, and as a type of grief over the loss of a healthy place or a thriving ecosystem" (Cunsolo and Ellis 2018), solastagia manifests particularly strongly for the Indigenous practitioners/authors whose work informs my own (e.g., Silko, Kimmerer, Maracle, and Inupiaq drummers). Importantly, scholars who specialize in solastagia do not view it as giving in to hopelessness and inaction. Rather, ecological grief can be catalyzing and, collectively, "may coalesce into a strengthened sense of love and commitment to the places, ecosystems and species that inspire, nurture and sustain us" (Cunsolo and Ellis 2018). What is clearly shown through my primary texts, however, is that at least some of the work inspired by solastagia can and should involve remembrance for those whose losses we grieve. Even when memory work is dominated by grief, as with Tahlequah's public vigil for her calf, there is more to the ethics/politics of attending to the dead that is worth analyzing.

Keeping the dead/departed alive in memory is part of what remembrance can accomplish beyond or in collaboration with (non-past-oriented) mourning. The dead are "held" in memory so

that they can be honored and well cared for. The alternative—to actively or passively forget

these beings *and* the unjust conditions of their deaths—is regarded as an egregious moral failure

by the narratives and practitioners I rely upon. Collectively, these texts demonstrate that

remembrance can be practiced by/for a wide variety of beings on scales ranging from

species/ecosystems down to individuals, from the recently dead to distant ancestors. The work of

honoring/caring for the recently dead often begins by tending to their remains. Unable to walk

past a dead swan she finds on the shores of Salt Lake, Williams (121-22) takes time for the

deceased,

> Its body lay contorted on the beach like an abandoned lover…I knelt beside the
> bird, took off my deerskin gloves, and began smoothing feathers. I lifted both wings
> out from under its belly and spread them on the sand. Untangling the long neck
> which was wrapped around itself was more difficult, but finally I was able to
> straighten it, resting the swan's chin flat against the shore. The small dark eyes had
> sunk behind the yellow lores. It was a whistling swan. I looked for two black stones,
> found them, and placed them over the eyes like coins. They held. Using my own
> saliva as my mother and grandmother had done to wash my face, I washed the
> swan's black bill and feet until they shone like patent leather.

Such scenes are extremely common across the narratives and practices I engage. The Inupiaq, to

cite another example, accept responsibility for retrieving and cleaning the bodies of decomposing

bowhead whales trapped beneath the ice even though they are counted towards the annual quota

set by the International Whaling Commission despite being inedible (Sakakibara 2009). One

need only look to Tahlequah to appreciate how impactful practicing remembrance with/for the

bodies of the deceased can be, that is, when undertaken in such a way as to dare others to forgot.

When physical remains are absent, deemphasized, or represented through land, the focus

shifts to memory work. But even when the deceased themselves may be less tangible,

remembrance is often no less physical or active. Some narratives, such as *Ceremony* (Silko 1977)

and "Griots of the Galaxy" (Hairston 2004), make honoring the long dead a central piece of their

protagonist's journey. Neither Tayo nor Axala, however, accomplish remembrance through

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thought/affect alone, relying upon deed and (in Alaxa's case) embodiment to get the job done.

The crucial role that Black women's storytelling plays in tending simultaneously to memory and land on Johns Island is likewise instructive in illuminating what Butler (2019b) intends with the idea of "root-working." Maracle (2015) also espouses the virtues of training children in the ways of memory via story and dance. Winterson (2007, 105) builds memory into the very fabric of her fictional universe, with one lover explaining to the other as they await environmental cataclysm:

> Everything is imprinted forever with what it once was…You call it consciousness. Programmers call it cell memory…The universe is an imprint. You are part of the imprint—it imprints you, you imprint it. You cannot separate yourself from the imprint, and you can never forget it. It isn't a 'something,' it is you…I will say it again. I will never forget you. I can never forget you.

Any number of qualities described in the preceding examples could be used to segue into this next aspect of remembrance—ceremony. The reverent tending of remains, the commitment to certain kinds of action, the embodiment of memory, the instructive ritual of story, the centrality of land—these all feature in various fictional and nonfictional ceremonies for the dead. The remarks that Kimmerer (2013) uses to bookend *Braiding Sweetgrass* have been with me from the start of this project. "Our elders say that ceremonies are the way we 'remember to remember,'" she writes, "When we forget, the dances we'll need will be for mourning. For the passing of the polar bears, the silence of the cranes, for the death of rivers and the memory of snow" (5, 383). Such remembrance ceremonies are readily apparent throughout the texts that have taught me the most about environmental justice for the dead the dying. Indeed, it may be their most unifying feature. From Ti-Jeanne's labor at the crossroads (Hopkinson 1998) to the douens' painstaking disposal of their daddy tree (Hopkinson 2000) to the evolving Inupiaq drumming practices (Sakakibara 2009), Afrofuturist and Indigenous narrative and practice richly demonstrate the greater significance that ceremonies for the dead can take on when contextualized ecologically, politically, emotionally, and spiritually. I would argue that some of

these texts even serve as ceremony in and of themselves; that is, they not only comment on the

important practice of ceremonial remembrance but demonstrate this work themselves through

their prose. Here, I have in mind *Memory Serves*, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, and (unsurprisingly)

*Ceremony*, all of which attend to their dead directly, contextually, and transcendently.

Remembrance, especially as ceremony, is also a communal practice. This is not to say

that individuals can never practice remembrance outside of group settings, however, memory

work never occurs in an ecological or ideological vacuum. Maracle (2015, 45) explains,

> [Salish] memory directs us to community by overcoming dissonance inside
> ourselves. This means, first, tracking back to the beginning of the dissonance in
> ourselves and, secondly, inviting other to join us in examining our dissonance and
> sharing the origin. We once had slaves, so some of our dissonance begins with that
> system to slavery. We must as ex-slave holders commit to overcoming masterhood,
> for we know that the attitude that permitted us to enslave others persists long after
> the slaves have been freed. We are vigilant. We question ourselves: are we speaking
> from our masterhood or from the notion that we are all the same height.

Likewise, although some aspects of remembrance may be private or limited to particular

communities, those who attend to the unjustly dead must demand or receive some sort of public

acknowledgement for their work to qualify as justice. "Ceremony focuses attention so that

attention becomes intention," Kimmerer (2013, 249) writes, "If you stand together and profess a

thing before your community, it holds you accountable. Ceremonies transcend the boundaries of

the individual and resonate beyond the human realm. These acts of reverence are powerfully

pragmatic. These are ceremonies that magnify life." The work that Butler (2019b) describes and

participates in on Johns Island would certainly seem to fit this mold. Tahlequah too was only

able to practice remembrance for her calf with the support of her pod and—just as importantly

for her larger purposes—of local scientists and even those sharing her story on social media sites.

Communal and/or ceremonial practices of remembrance also appear in feminist settler

narratives and practice with varying degrees of success. Both Williams' and Agnieszka's (Novik

2015) work with the dying/dead have ritual aspects, though they practice mostly in isolation. To

be fair, by identifying pen/paper as her weapons in *Refuge*, Williams deliberately seeks out a

wider audience with particular ecological and political goals in mind. Atwood too is very

conscious of the role that community and ceremony play in environmental theory and practice.

In *The Year of the Flood* (2009), Toby's living remembrance of Pilar involves taking on her role

as Eve Six in the God's Gardeners community, a practice she is only successful at thanks to the

cooperation of the bees and mushrooms. Ritualized storytelling also emerges as a theme in the

*MaddAddam* trilogy. Though some of these stories are instructive, most serve the primary

purpose of keeping the dead present in survivors' collective memory with characters openly

recognizing the difficulty of such work. Ultimately, it is through the development of the God's

Gardeners that Atwood is able to achieve the narrative depth necessary for the emergence of

ceremony. As a fringe religious order, the Gardeners have unique hymns (dozens of which are

included in the books), saint's days, core set of values, and ecological relationships. On a

particularly dark day following the Flood, their leader (Adam One) recites the following prayer:

> "Dear Diplodocus, dear Pterosaur, dear Trilobite; dear Mastodon, dear Dodo, dear
> Great Auk, dear Passenger Pigeon; dear Panda, dear Whooping Crane; and all you
> countless others who have played in this our shared Garden in our day: be with us
> at this time of trial, and strengthen our resolve. Like you, we have enjoyed the air
> and the sunlight and the moonlight on the water; like you, we have heard the call
> of the seasons and have answered them. Like you, we have replenished the Earth.
> And like you, we must now witness the end of our Species, and pass from Earthly
> view." (Atwood 2010, 423)

Atwood has long been critiqued for failing to be attentive to colonial politics and Indigenous

futurities. Ironically, this may be what spares the God's Gardeners from the rampant cultural

appropriation[63] that so often manifests in settler eco-spiritualities. Imparting yet more wisdom,

Kimmerer (2013, 250) warns, "To have agency in the world, ceremonies should be reciprocal

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[63] It may very well still be there, but I would argue the effect is more subtle.

cocreations, organic in nature, in which the community creates ceremony and the ceremony

creates community. They should not be cultural appropriations from Native peoples. But

generating new ceremony in today's world is hard to do."

This also raises the question of who can and ought to practice remembrance for the

unjustly dead.[64] Some communities appoint or vet their own remembrancers[65] or, as in the Salish

context, "rememberers" (Maracle 2015). Other times, remembrancers manifest even where they

are decidedly unwanted. In *The Stars are Legion*, the world-ships produce bizarre mutant

witches whose memories are longer (and stranger) than everyone else's (Hurley 2017). Jayd

reflects,

> Every time the witches are recycled, they lose a little bit of their sanity on rebirth…I
> wish I understood their loyalties. Do they belong to the ship or to Mother? Like
> everything else that belongs to the world, they are reborn in the womb of a woman,
> usually the same one, but if we kill that woman, the ship simply gives another one
> the task of birthing the witches, and we start again. We can never get rid of the
> witches, no matter how many times they are killed or recycled. They always come
> back. (Hurley 2017, 40-1)

(Counter)memory can prove stubbornly resilient. The dynamics of having outsiders practice

remembrance, particularly when they are responsible for the deaths in question, is also tackled

directly in the literature. Tan-Tan, for one, experiences deep guilt to be present at the ceremony

for the daddy tree whose demise she brought about. And though she feels that she has no right to

be part of the douens' mourning, "the tree had held her in its arms too" and so she remains on the

outskirts to quietly whisper her gratitude and an apology (Hopkinson 200, 277). Axala and the

other griots also find their own way to practice remembrance for those whose lives they once

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[64] I will touch on this question here and return to it again in the following section.
[65] I owe the term "remembrancer" to Garth Nix's *Abhorsen* trilogy (1995-2003). In these novels, the character of Lirael discovers that she has the ability to gaze into the past but only by walking in Death, depicted here (and elsewhere) as a treacherous river.

colonized, but only after they commit to making Earth their permanent home. Prior to their embodiment within the grove, Hairston makes clear that the griots' mission was far too extractive to be deemed genuine remembrance. And while there are numerous examples of communities engaged in memory work by and for themselves (e.g., the root-workers of Johns Island, Inupiaq drummers), practices like Abigail Jordan's monument and Tahlequah's demonstrate conditions under which it is not only appropriate but necessary to demand remembrance from those responsible.

The question of who gets/ought to practice remembrance is also worth considering given that attending to the dead is not only difficult but dangerous work. For one, characters and practitioners always run the risk of remembering poorly. Linaya, the Wood-Queen's sister, explains to Agnieszka,

> Our people were alone here a long time…We began to forget how to be people. We dwindled away little by little. When the sorcerer-king came with his people, my sister let them come into the valley. She thought they could teach us to remember. She thought we could be renewed, and teach them in turn; we could give each other life. But they were afraid. They wanted to live, they wanted to grow stronger, but they didn't want to change. They learned the wrong things…But if we stay, if we fight, we will remember the wrong things. And then we would become—…We decided that we would rather not remember. (Novik 2015, 411-14)

*Brown Girl in the Ring* contrasts Gros-Jeanne's work serving the spirits with Rudy's obeah: "Rudy is a shadow-catcher. He got the spirit of someone dead in that calabash, that does do he work for he. Rudy does work the dead to control the living" (Hopkinson 1998, 121). In embracing her power, Ti-Jeanne runs the risk of following in her grandfather's footsteps, i.e., twisting her gift to force the spirits to serve her, stealing and wearing youth, and collaborating with the white elites. And, as Atwood (2005-13) and others demonstrate, when navigating the (post)apocalypse, the choice to live in one's memories rather than practice remembrance can threaten one's survival.

Even when practiced well, however, remembrance can be dangerous. Butler (2019b) recounts that the root-workers of Johns Island often refuse to tell certain stories. Whole childhoods are summed up in interviews thusly, "I was a poor Black girl growing up on Johns Island. Period. Moving on." Butler laments that there is so much knowledge on the island but not all elders feel it's important to talk about. There is a reason that Abigail Jordan's statue was controversial not only amongst members of the white but of the Black community as well. Savannah City councilman David Jones captured some of the sentiment behind the resistance, "I myself wouldn't want to be reminded of… [the horrors of slavery] every time I looked at it [the monument]. History's a hell of a thing. It can hurt" (Alderman 2010, 99). A compromise was stuck; Maya Angelou's words were not changed but the inscription was amended to end, "Today, we are standing up together, with faith and even some joy" (97). It is crucial to not lose sight of the fact that the contexts in which many survivors are left to practice remembrance can feel unbearable. Essun reflects, "There is such a thing as too much loss. Too much has been taken from you both—taken and taken and taken, until there's nothing left but hope, and you've given that up because it hurts too much. Until you would rather die, or kill, or avoid attachments altogether, than lose one more thing" (Jemisin 2016, 105). Science fiction narratives such as the *Broken Earth* trilogy and *The Starts are Legion*, (re)describe the relationship between memory and madness: "At the heart of every ship is a witch. She is the only one of us who remembers everything. And it's the knowledge that has driven them all mad" (Hurley 2017, 53). Zan's amnesia is an obstacle and a gift, with the return of each memory both aiding her quest and causing her increasing pain. At the end of her journey Zan narrates, "We are two women standing at the edge of the Legion, our armies dead, our people broken, with a history between us that I no longer want filled in any further. Instead, in my mind I construct a future...It's a

potential future for us, as real as the potential of the child I sacrificed to get here, as real as the dreams of the people who helped to get me this far" (Hurley 2017, 380). The demands of remembrance for the dead must be considered in light of the basic physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of the living who practice it.

Indeed, another crucial feature of remembrance highlighted in the literature is the balance to be had between remembering the unjust circumstances of death/departure and the best of who the deceased/departed were in life. Likewise, these texts explore the tension between remembering the dead and celebrating the living. As Kathryn Yusoff (2018, 17) critiques with the aid of Saidiya Hartman's work, there is an unfortunate tendency in both theory and art to reproduce the "spectacular character of black suffering." And, as discussed in Chapter Two, (post)apocalyptic science fiction fantasy (broadly speaking) fosters/feeds a bread and circus spectacle of tragic death. Resisting these tropes, the texts I call upon work hard to practice remembrance for the beautiful legacies buried alongside tragedy and injustice. They demonstrate that the dead, like the living, are more than victims; those who are remembered well become survivors in death. Maracle writes (2015, 30),

> Salish people endured a terrible flood. We could have remembered the horrific death, the horror of mammalian destruction, the loss of millions of relatives, the hunger, the horrific struggle to eat, to live. Instead, we remember three women, seducing the same man and having him give us all children, build a longhouse, so that we could begin again. We recall what we need to know to travel in the direction we choose or do not choose. This is the word of conscious remembering.

This tension/balance is also evident in Savannah and on Johns Island, with stories of the violence of environmental racism vying/complementing stories of "resistance, creativity, and survival in the face of brutality" (Alderman 2010, 99, Butler 2019b). On Cascade Head in Oregon, Kimmerer (2013) demonstrates how being looped into place-based memory (and other kinds of

environmental) work opens up avenues for different kinds of emotional and ethical labor, as well as interspecies partnerships for remembrance:

> Before I knew this story, before the fire lit my dreams, I would have hiked here like everyone else, snapping photos at scenic viewpoints…Before I knew the story, I would have written some field notes…Instead I just stand there, tears running down my cheeks in nameless emotion that tastes of joy and grief. Joy for the being of the shimmering world and grief for what we have lost. The grasses remember the nights they were consumed by fire, lighting the way back with a conflagration of love between species. Who today even knows what that means? I drop to my knees in the grass and I can hear the sadness, as if the land itself was crying for its people: *Come home. Come home*. (248)

Human or nonhuman, practitioners of remembrance must grapple with the difficulties of attending to the(ir) dead (and the past) while sustaining life. As with palliation, the knowledge that remembrance is never enough can weigh heavy on the heart even in those moments when the present and the future seem bright.

## C. Commonalities

Thus far, I have described environmental palliation as the least that the unjustly dying deserve even when the best it can offer still falls far short of what is owed. Specifically, palliation is the practice of attending to the dying by easing their suffering and providing them with good/better deaths. Key components of the latter include, but are not limited to, the acknowledgment of death and continued maintenance of relationships. The practice of palliation highlights the complexities of facilitating or even choosing death in the (post)apocalypse as well as the importance of understanding such determinations within their eco-political context(s). In death, palliation cedes to remembrance, an ethic/practice for keeping the dead alive in memory (in part) so that they can be cared for. Going beyond mourning and symbolic memorial, remembrance is a communal practice that often manifests as or through ceremony. Remembrance can prove quite perilous for the practitioner and is further complicated by the need

to balance grief and joy as well as needs of the living with those of the dead. Palliation and remembrance also share important commonalities, several of which I explore in this section.

To begin with, both ethics/practices go beyond the affective. Again, this is not to discount the importance of ecological grief or to claim that mourning/grief do not belong to the work of attending to the dead and the dying of environmental injustice. Rather, I—and the texts I rely upon—understand palliation and remembrance as practices with affective dimensions rather than as emotional or psychological states/orientations. Maracle (2015, 1) is clear from the start, "Memory serves. It is directed by condition, culture, and objective. It is conjured by systemic practice. It is shaped by results." Likewise, Kimmerer (2013, 248) observes,

> It is an odd dichotomy we have set for ourselves, between loving people and loving land. We know that loving a person has agency and power—we know it can change everything. Yet we act as if loving the land is an internal affair that has no energy outside the confines of our head and heart.

This literature challenges settler and/or privileged environmentalists/isms who either (a) dismiss the theoretical/practical relevance of affect or (b) center their own emotions in leu of action. At the same time, these texts draw attention to how linking environmental ethics for the dead and the dying too firmly to the affective dimensions of loss risks problematically limiting who can be part of this work, given that genuine mourning may require certain intimacies and relationalities not widely available (Mitchell 2017).[66]

For in the end, not only are palliation and remembrance practices but situated, *expert* practices. Palliative work requires carefully cultivated knowledge of how best to ease the suffering and provide good/better deaths of/for particular beings, entities, or communities. Remembrance too depends upon really knowing who the dead were in life. Raw, untethered knowledge is not enough, however, for practitioners of both palliation and remembrance must

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[66] I revisit this dynamic in more detail in the next section.

hone their skills. When discussing Ti-Jeanne's gift, Gros-Jeanne explains, "It mean you could ease people passing, light the way for them. For them to cross over from this world or the next. But I go have to train you" (Hopkinson 1998, 103). Likewise, Maracle (2015, 23) describes in detail what it takes to become a Salish rememberer:

> First and foremost, remembering requires that human beings assign themselves the task of observing, selecting, and committing to memory certain phenomena. It also requires that the rememberer possess the acumen, skill, and training for recollection. It is critical that the human recalling an event possesses recall with a high degree of accuracy and that the faculty of the rememberer is recognized and honoured by her or his community.

Indeed, those skilled in remembrance and palliation are often tasked with using their hard-won expertise to help others in their communities to practice and/or support the work, e.g., Agnieszka's efforts to involve both the walkers[67] and human villagers in palliation/rehabilitation of the heart-trees (Novik 2015). Guiding others—as demonstrated by the scientists familiar with Tahlequah—to understand the eco-political contexts in which these deaths occur is a crucial aspect of this process. For these experts are not trained to relate to palliative and remembrance work abstractly but as practices for known beings in particular places by those with situated perspectives (Maracle 2015). This need not mean that these ethics/practitioners remain or become isolated. As Maracle (62) reflects, "Wolf and Frog clans are committed to discourse outside of their habitats to augment understanding and achieve knowledge, so all is not lost. Discourse between rememberers from different clans and animals and even different nations used to occur." Those attending to the dead and the dying in the time of climate change—and other environmental (post)apocalypse—may be situated on different lands and attending to various (overlapping or divergent) ecological partners, but they can and, at times, do choose to converge their perspectives and expertise.

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[67] Insect-like creatures tasked with the planting/caretaking of possessed heart-trees by the Wood-Queen.

It helps that collaboration is already built into the ethical weft and warp of palliation and remembrance. These are intimate practices that demand to be practiced *with* another/others rather than as something done for them without their input and/or consent. "Remembering begins with listening like a lover, listening like a mother, listening like a child, listening like this may be the very last thing I ever hear," Maracle writes (2015, 22). Kimmerer (2013, 178) takes great care to unpack the practices of traditional harvesters wherein "asking permission shows respect for the personhood of the plant, but it is also an assessment of the well-being of the population." In this context, ascertaining a response to one's query depends upon paying attention to both individuals and their surroundings. As dialogic interspecies ethics for navigating the after-/end-of-life, palliation and remembrance must be just as attentive. In fact, the Inupiaq have adapted their drumming practices to maintain their relationships to bowheads (via palliation) even as the answers articulated by the whales and their environs are increasingly to deny the harvest. As Inupiaq elder George Ahmaogak, Sr. explains,

> Human-whale spirituality will be changing. If our contact with the whale is kept influenced by global warming, our spirituality will soon start eroding. Now we must think, feel, and see like a whale to retain our relation. Feeling about the whale and oneness with the animal keep us [both humans and whales] alive, and this can be continued with the re-recognition of our traditional events like drum music. (Sakakibara 2009, 299)

Both palliation and remembrance are *relational* ethics/practices.

Under conditions of environmental injustice, relational interspecies ethics for the dead and the dying function to highlight not only which relations to cherish and maintain but also those to be disavowed. "A discussion between a Salish Wolf rememberer and a Salish Frog rememberer, as well as between them and the wolves and frogs they are related to," Maracle (2015, 62) remarks, "reveals that the relation among swamps, insects, humans and health is critical from a historical perspective in order to understand the decline of swamp life on the West

Coast and its relationship to the decline of public and environmental health and human and salmon suicide." In their own ways, practitioners of both palliation and remembrance work to publicly bear witness to the dying/dead *and* the injustice of their deaths. *Uprooted*'s (Novik 2015, 426) Agnieszka narrates,

> I stood clear and kindled [the heart-tree] with a word. Then I sat heavily and wiped my hands on the grass as well as I could, and pulled my knees up to my chest. The walkers folded their legs neatly and sat around me. The tree didn't thrash or shriek, already more than half gone; it went up quickly and burned without much smoke. Flakes of ash fell on the damp ground and melted into it like early snowflakes. They landed on my bare arms sometimes, not big enough to burn, just tiny sparks. I didn't back away. We were the only mourners the tree and its dreamers had left.

Back among the human valley-folk, Agnieszka works to reimagine—for herself and others—the Wood as something other than a malicious threat and the Wood-Queen's actions as other than evil, a shift which requires the community to rethink their role in the conflict and relationship to the land. Here and elsewhere, bearing witness to the dying/dead builds upon the acknowledgement of death, adding a prophetic dimension. In other words, when practiced openly by those with sufficient expertise, palliation and remembrance are authoritative, inspired declarations for how the living should relate to the dead and each other. Given the conditions under which they are practiced, however, palliation and remembrance are not merely suggestive guides but imperatives for the present and the future. Across the texts I work with, the message is clear—attending to the dead and the dying are crucial aspects of *survival* in the (post)apocalypse.

Narratives and practitioners alike intentionally link palliation and remembrance to the ethics of healing and transformation. Williams (1991, 4) reflects at the beginning of her memoir, "Perhaps, I am telling this story in an attempt to heal myself, to confront what I do not know, to create a path for myself with the idea that 'memory is the only way home.' I have been in retreat. This story is my return." Essun's story arc across the entire *Broken Earth* trilogy (Jemisin 2015-17) exemplifies a fantastical version of just such a journey. After Essun sacrifices her human

life/form, readers learn that every piece of trilogy's narration has been the story of Essun's life told back to her as she metamorphosizes so that she can remember her past/world upon awakening. The narrator (Hoa) concludes,

> You'll lose some memory. There is always loss, with change. But I have told you this story, primed what remains of you, to retain as much as possible of who you were. Not to force you into a particular shape, mind you. From here on, you may become whomever you wish. It's just that you need to know where you've come from to know where you're going. Do you understand? (Jemisin 2017, 397)

Similarly, the archives of Black island lives compiled by Butler's (2019b) root-workers function to support individuals/community as they work through gendered racialized trauma past and present. Here and in other contexts (e.g., AIDS), archives of trauma function as "a ritual space within which cultural memory and history are preserved…" and "enable the acknowledgement of a past that can be painful to remember, impossible to forget, and resistant to consciousness" (Cvetkovich 2003, 241). In this way and others, the work of tending to the dying and remembering the dead/departed are part of how individuals and communities care for themselves in the aftermath of tragedy/injustice. These ethics/practices help survivors heal from loss so that they have the emotional, practical, and spiritual resources to do what is necessary moving forward.

By situating deaths/departures within the larger eco-political contexts to which they belong, palliation and remembrance also aid in determining the trajectory of this forward motion. Maracle (2015, 2, 8, 17) explains,

> To re-member is, first, directional. Indigenous people commit to memory those aspects of those events that suit the direction we are moving in or the direction we want to move in if a shift is occurring…We are called upon to remember the past and redetermine our direction. If we had a difficult past we are expected to let go of the governing feelings of that past and remember the losses created by the difficulty so that we may create a different path. In the process we become intimate with both the difficulty and ourselves in the context of this difficulty…Some deep part of our memory knows the future depends on us and what we choose to remember.

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Awakened to her new existence equipped with the memories (hers and others') of who she was and how the Evil Earth came to be, Essun hits the ground running. Jemisin (2017, 398) concludes the *Broken Earth* trilogy with the following dialogue/narration:

> Hoa: What do you want?
> Essun: I want the world to be better.
> H: Then let's go make it better.
> E: Just like that?
> H: It might take some time.
> E: I don't think I'm very patient.
> *Don't be patient. Don't ever be. This is the way a new world begins*.[68]
> H: Neither am I…So let's get to it.

Indigenous, Afrofuturist, or otherwise, how could palliative and remembrance practices that fully bear witness to the unjustly dying/dead *not* demand different environmental trajectories? Indeed, the texts that I work with situate environmental ethics for the dead/dying and the living as (mostly)[69] complementary dimensions of transformative eco-politics not separate endeavors.

In addition to illustrating various elements of palliation and remembrance, each of these narratives and/or lived practices explore how environmental justice for the dying/dead, the living, and those yet-to-be can be approached holistically. When done right, palliation and remembrance are a part of intergenerational environmental praxis. Ti-Jeanne's journey in *Brown Girl in the Ring* (Hopkinson 1998) exemplifies this dynamic beautifully. In her quest to overcome necromantic and economic exploitation, Ti-Jeanne must become familiar with not only with Legbara (i.e., the Prince of the Cemetery) but with his life-driven aspect Eshu, guardian of the crossroads. Even after she succeeds, Legbara/Eshu do not let Ti-Jeanne off the hook, sending the sick to her door thereby setting her on Gros-Jeanne's path of healing. In so doing, Hopkinson

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[68] As referenced in Chapter Two, Jemisin's trilogy opens with, "Let's start with the end of the world, why don't we? Get it over and move on to more interesting things" (2015, 1).

[69] As in any—fictional or nonfictional—context where environmental ethics prove be useful for working towards justice, there is the potential for the needs of various stakeholders to conflict.

encourages readers to attend to crossroads not simply as finite intangible moments of crisis but as ecological phenomena—terrain that living/dying beings must navigate together through daily practice. In the nonfictional world, Inupiaq drummers demonstrate how seamless the work of palliation, remembrance, and transformation can be when previous interspecies musical/cultural practices are reworked for adapting to environmental transformation (Sakakibara 2009). The climax of *Ceremony* (Silko 1977) depends upon the realization of this holism. Arriving at the point of convergence, Tayo "cried the relief he felt at finally seeing the pattern, the way all the stories fit together—the old stories, the war stories, their stories—to become the story that was still being told. He was not crazy; he had never been crazy. He had only seen and heard the world as it always was: no boundaries, only transitions through all distance and time" (229). If not for the fact that mainstream environmental(ism) ethics has long neglected the dead and the dying, there would be little reason to analyze palliation and remembrance separately.

### D. Quandaries

It's possible that you have read this far and, in addition to being somewhat word-weary, are of the opinion that palliation and remembrance sound like worthwhile endeavors. In addition to the tensions and complications I have outlined thus far,[70] however, there are two major quandaries that arise when practicing environmental ethics for the dead and the dying under the particular conditions of environmental injustice in which we currently find ourselves. To begin with, both the material and ideological conditions that gave/give rise to global climate change situate those who are most culpable as (in general) the least capable of practicing palliation and remembrance. This poses significant problems for equitably attending to the unjustly dead and the dying. One aspect of this quandary is the issue of witnesses and/or acknowledgment; it is still

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[70] E.g., the tension between facilitating and choosing death for others, the risks of practicing remembrance, the context of moral failure.

that case that the dying/dead can be easily ignored by those participating in the forms of life most responsible for climate change. Even those who care deeply about environmental wrongdoing and destruction have tended to overlook justice for the dying/dead.[71] When the environmentally privileged do endeavor to bear witness to the tragedy of the so-called Anthropocene, it often manifests through symbolic memorials or as an abrupt about-face from past-oriented ethics to nihilistic futurities that want nothing to do with the past. These privileged death ethics can be found, for example, in Roy Scranton's (2013) article "Learning How to Die in the Anthropocene," which ends:

> The choice is a clear one. We can continue acting as if tomorrow will be just like yesterday, growing less and less prepared for each new disaster as it comes, and more and more desperately invested in a life we can't sustain. Or we can learn to see each day as the death of what came before, freeing ourselves to deal with whatever problems the present offers without attachment or fear. If we want to learn to live in the Anthropocene, we must first learn how to die.

In addition to erasing those who are already quite experienced with dying under conditions of environmental injustice, the idea of severing climate justice from all attachment and emotion seems (at best) unlikely to generate liberatory futurities. Furthermore, such approaches neither demonstrate nor reference any of the carefully cultivated expertise necessary for palliation and remembrance work. This is because the knowledge of how best to provide good deaths for and keep alive the memory of specific nonhuman and interspecies communities is produced by engaging attentively and equitably with our ecological partners. The lack of such engagement, however, is a prominent characteristic of the forms of life driving global climate change and other related environmental injustices.

Any call for palliative environmental care and remembrance must therefore grapple with this epistemic and spiritual impoverishment. Octavia Butler (1993) anticipated and imaginatively

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[71] As outlined in Chapter One.

mirrored just such an imbalance in the Afrofuturist and climate fiction classic—*Parable of the Sower*. The novel depicts the life of Lauren Olamina, founder of the Earthseed religion. Born with "hyperempathy," Lauren is able to share the emotions and sensations of others in close proximity to her. In other stories/contexts hyperempathy might be counted a blessing, but for a young Black woman living in a dystopic society rife with suffering, Butler is clear to frame it as a liability. For environmentalists to understand those in close relationships or proximity to their ecological partners as uncomplicatedly privileged is similarly dubious in light of colonialism, capitalism, and climate change. At the same time, it would be highly problematic to presume to practice palliation/remembrance without consulting with those who best know the dying, dead, or departed. If acknowledged and incorporated into mainstream environmentalism and climate justice, the pursuit of remembrance and palliation must neither exclude nor unjustly burden those individuals or communities disproportionately vulnerable to or harmed by global climate change.

The second quandary is specific to the ethic/practice of remembrance. As widely acknowledged by the narratives and practitioners I rely upon, there is great potential for memory to be coopted. As Alderman (2010, 90) notes in the context of Savannah, "Places of memory narrate history in selective ways that not only contribute to the process of remembering, but also the process of forgetting." While some consider the consequences of remembering the wrong things (e.g., Kimmerer 2013, Novik's 2015), other texts directly tackle manifestations of exploitative or oppressive memory. In "Griots of the Galaxy" Hairston (2004) describes extractive memory practices through the imaginative mirror of body-jumping aliens. Early on Axala reflects,

> Body historians were serial amnesiacs, conscious only of our griot's creed and the Edges, the sliding in and out of a life. I had twice ten thousand Earth years of Edges. That and a griot's loyalty to the soul mines. Dropping in for a quickie then suiciding out to somebody else was a total waste of resources. Griots rode a body as long as

possible. In the soul mines, you collected lives; you didn't sacrifice yourself to save one. (25)

Hurley (2017, 3) writes, "There is nothing I fear more than someone without memory. A person without memory is free to do anything she likes." Zan is both more dangerous and more vulnerable as the result of her carefully orchestrated, repeated amnesia. Jemisin (2015-2017, 8) delves even deeper into the politics of intentional forgetting or misremembering in the *Broken Earth* trilogy, making sure readers know early on that "memories are fragile as slate in the Stillness." Essun and others struggle to fill in significant gaps in the history of the empire/world, most or which pertain to the moon and the nature/origin of the orogenes. Though an order of dedicated "Lorists"—the last remnants of an Indigenous people who dedicated themselves to history—exists, they have "forgotten how much they've forgotten" and their work is largely discounted as "mere" storytelling (Jemisin 2017, 3). When Essun's mentor conducts his own research on the empire's founding documents, he discovers that:

> The original Tablet Three spoke of…how the Moon was lost. This knowledge, for many reasons, has been deemed unacceptable again and again down the millennia since. No one really wants to face the fact that the world is the way it is because some arrogant, self-absorbed people tried to put a leash on the rusting planet. And no one was ready to accept that the solution to the whole mess was simply to let orogenes live and thrive and do what they were born to do…the world as he knew it could not function without forcing someone into servitude. At the time he could see no end to the cycle, no way to demand the impossible of society. (313)

Attending to ecological rupture by returning the moon to orbit will not heal The Stillness unless the gravitational locus of people's memories can be restructured as well.

Fortunately, narratives and practitioners have already been grappling with the quandaries of limited/skewed expertise and memory cooptation. In fact, with regards to the former, these texts are themselves working to cultivate recognition of the expertise needed to practice palliation and remembrances in addition to the demand for these ethics. One way this is accomplished is by demonstrating the value of such expertise in particular fictional or

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nonfictional contexts. Some texts go about this by highlighting or embodying the work of particular Indigenous experts (e.g., Silko 1977, Sakakibara 2009, Kimmerer 2013, Maracle 2015). Elsewhere, environmentally privileged authors adopt a pronounced prophetic stance to address to target those most responsible for environmental deaths, that is, others like them (e.g., Williams 1991, Atwood 2003-2013). These texts also contain numerous (positive and negative) models for (un)ethical inter-personal/communal communication and collaboration. Forced to occupy liminal space and build bridges between communities, both Tan-Tan's (Hopkinson 2000) and Agnieszka's (Novik 2015) journeys personify such work. Perhaps most importantly, by recognizing the laborious and, at times, dangerous aspects of palliation and remembrance, these texts emphasize the necessity of balancing the needs of the dying/dead with the survival/adaptation of persons and communities who are especially vulnerable. Furthermore, they richly demonstrate the ways in which these ethics/practices are not always/simply burdensome but part of how survivors of environmental injustice flourish in the long run.

As for the corruption and cooptation of memory, not only is this dynamic familiar to remembrancers, this is precisely the context for which remembrance work is designed. None of the narratives/practitioners I rely upon understand remembrance as a neutral or apolitical endeavor. Across these (post)apocalyptic landscapes, memory has already been corrupted or coopted to (among other things) excise the dead and reframe injustice as progress. Remembrance work is therefore practiced as resistance or counter-memory. In Savannah, for example, where confederate monuments outnumbered memorials to slavery forty-two to zero at the turn of the century, Abigail Jordan and the wider Black community were "forced to engage in a recovery from slavery as well as a recovery of slavery" (Alderman 2010, 93; Savannah Morning News 2019). Memorials belonging to remembrance work serve as refusals to forget. Remembrancers

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are also keenly attuned to the ways in which power manifests through memory. "When settlers tell us to 'forget the past,'" Maracle (2015, 37) argues, "they are asking us to remain powerless. Without memory, we can never be any more intelligent than we are at that moment. No growth can occur. We cannot imagine justice without evaluating the past." The pursuit of liberatory (post)apocalyptic futurities depends upon resistant remembrance and the life ways (i.e., the land, ecological partnerships, relational ethics, etc.) that make this work possible.

Ultimately, remembrance and palliation trouble traditional intergenerational ethics and the linear temporality that sustains them. In both narrative and practice, the temporal dynamics of environmental justice are far from simple. The success of Tayo's ceremony, for example, depends as much upon people not yet born as those who have already died. "There is no time differentiation in the conjuring of memory," Maracle (2015, 7) writes, "Future is a remembered thing the very moment I give voice inside my mind to my imagined participation in tomorrow." In the same vein, a Johns Island storyteller conveyed to her conviction to Butler (2019b) that "the future will bring back the past." Hairston's (2004) griots pledge themselves to just such work. Perhaps no text tangles memory, time, and apocalypse as thoroughly as Winterson's (2007) *Stone Gods*. Contemplating planetary and personal death with her lover across two timelines/worlds, the protagonist reflects,

> Some religions call life a dream, or a dreaming, but what if it is a memory? What if this new world isn't new at all but a memory of a new world? What if we really do keep making the same mistakes again and again, never remembering the lessons to learn but never forgetting either that it had been different…Perhaps the universe is a memory of our mistakes…A quantum universe—neither random nor determined. A universe of potentialities, waiting for an intervention to affect the outcome. Love is an intervention. Why do we not choose it? (105-6, 244).

I would offer that the ethics/practices of palliation and remembrance are loving interventions in the (post)apocalypse. Recognizing the unrelenting reality of moral failure, they do not seek to undo death but affect its outcome for all those involved, the dead included. As reflected in

*Ceremony* (Silko 1977), the cycle's "ending" is not fixed even if the idea of pulling back from the brink is unintelligible.

## IV: Back to the Farm

Robin Kimmerer (2013) reminds me that loving the land is not a purely internal affair confined to head and heart, but an active practice with real power. I will be missing this year's Spring family week on the Farm to prepare for and attend my dissertation defense, but I understand this project as an extension of my work on/for that land. This chapter in particular has been my way of weaving together and learning from the best, with the goal of putting palliation and remembrance ethics into wider circulation and practice for both environmentalism broadly and the place I call home. I am still learning how to love the Farm not only from within and afar but through my work and with my life/body. Attending well to the dead and the dying on/of the Farm must be part of my loving practice as well as those of the Ryder family collectively. A large part of this work will involve reexamining the past, but palliation and remembrance must also be understood as fundamental to sustaining/transforming the Farm's future, especially if Farm and family hope to ethically respond to, and weather, climate change/injustice.

Us Ryders, however, have a lot to do before we can fully acknowledge—let alone bear witness to—all of the Farm's dead and dying. Much of this work will involve (re)building relationships and cultivating expertise here on the Farm. Though far from perfect or just, I believe the Ryders' relationships to and on this land (and each other) have long been our strength. Especially in recent years, the family has insisted upon valuing this land for more than its sale price or the revenue it could produce.[72] Furthermore, even in times when neither farming nor basic survival have necessitated it, there have always been Ryders who choose to develop

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[72] I say 'could' because for the past fifty years of organic farming we have operated at a loss or by barely breaking even.

intimate relationships with the land and those we share it with. Our overall vision statement for the Farm's Animal Policy[73] reads:

> We recognize that a farm is inherently an interspecies community. Whether domesticated, wild, or liminal, non-human animals have been and always will be integral members of the Ryder Farm. As the caretakers of this land, we commit ourselves to living together well with our animal cohabitants. Striving to do so is a vital part of what it means to tend to and balance, as best we can, the familial, ecological, financial, historical, and spiritual well-being of The Farm.

No one knows all of this place and these nonhuman persons, but collectively Ryders know a great deal. Much of this knowledge has relied upon there being family members willing to work the land, reside there year-round, and/or make daily or weekly visits. 2019 marks the first year in the living memory (of most Ryders) that the farmer—the person out in the fields everyday—will not be a family member. It took writing this chapter for me to fully feel the loss of this. If the Farm becomes a place where family only come to vacation once or twice a year, then the Ryders will have no hope of maintaining the kinds of relationships to the land necessary for practicing palliation, remembrance, and, in all likelihood, any form of environmental justice. The best we could do at that point would be to make space for others to practice these ethics on the Farm, but this, I would argue, does not meet the obligations generated by almost two-hundred and twenty-five years of Ryder habitation/occupation.

As of today, however, Ryders still reside on or near the Farm, making this land part of their daily or weekly lives. And there are far more of us, myself included, who make this place their home in other ways. Now more than ever, we need family members who will step up and consciously build relationships with the land and the dying/dead in particular. Ideally, Farm and family would not need to depend on a small number of individuals for this work. If we can learn to communicate and function more cohesively, then we can cultivate the necessary expertise as a

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[73] Recently revised by yours truly and approved by the board of Ryder Farm Incorporated in December of 2018.

community. At the center of the residential part of the Farm, for example, is a small pond. Dredged by my great-grandfather over a hundred years ago, the pond has been slowly filling in ever since. Year after year the pond scum expands, fish die, snapping turtles and mosquitos flourish, and Ryders reminisce fondly about the days when you could take a rowboat out on a nice day. Some might view the pond as a fitting target of restoration, with the end goal of either a deep, clear basin or the stream/swamp of yore. Indeed, there have been those among the family who have taken it upon themselves to kill snapping turtles in an attempt to boost the numbers of fish and fowl and, thereby, curtail algae. To my knowledge, there have been no Ryders who have attempted to ascertain what the pond/swamp and its denizens really want. None of us have taken the time to get to know this habitat intimately as it currently functions, to really listen to who is flourishing, who is struggling, who is missed, and who (if anyone) is unwelcome. Even if undertaken collectively, such an investigation—like most responsible remembrance/palliation efforts undertaken solely by 21st century Ryders—is likely to reveal an uncomfortable reality (for a WASPy family)—we cannot do this work alone.

In addition to cultivating relationships and expertise on this land, Ryders must also seek out partners and experts from beyond Farm and family. Currently, we are fortunate to have SPACE on Ryder Farm,[74] a nonprofit artists' residency program and, as of this year, farming operation co-founded by my cousin Emily Simoness. SPACE has been instrumental in connecting the Farm to many different communities locally and in New York City beyond those that our forty-year greenmarket and CSA presence had afforded us. Among SPACE's ultimate goals as a farming operation is to participate in food justice advocacy and education in the Tri-State area. But SPACE, though a valued partner, can (and, really, *ought*) only to do so much to

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[74] https://www.spaceonryderfarm.org/

foster community between the Ryder family and outside partners. If the family is serious about

growing reciprocal relationships with other experts and practitioners of palliation/remembrance,

we will have to partake of this community work ourselves and expand upon those bonds we have

forged over the last two hundred years. It will be particularly important for us Ryders, as the

family to whom this land was leased and eventually sold to following the Revolutionary War, to

reach out to the Wappinger and Munsee (Lenape) peoples whose ancestors were removed from

this land as well as to those Indigenous peoples who have since made the lower Hudson Valley

their home. Of course, IF these communities are open to receiving Ryders as partners in

decolonial and environmental justice,[75] the family will need to be especially vigilant and

proactive to ensure that its members do not to perpetuate extractive/oppressive inter-/personal

communal dynamics, i.e., relationships wherein resources and/or expertise only flow one way or

in which Ryders fail to respect kinds of expertise that may be unfamiliar to them.

Additionally, when seeking out new ecological and community partners we must hold

loosely to our expectations of what their ultimate impact may be. As with the development of

SPACE, us Ryders need to be open to how forging new partnerships may change us and the

Farm. How open we are to such alterations will depend in large part upon the kind of

overarching goal we set for ourselves and the Farm. If the goal is to better serve our dead, dying,

living, and future descendants while keeping the Farm as it is or restoring it to a(n imagined) past

idyllic state, then change will continue to be felt only as sorrow. But if Ryders commit

themselves to actively seeking out the gaps in our memory and expertise so that we can begin to

rewrite the story of the Farm past, present, and future, then we may be able to accept revelations

both bitter and sweet and love this land through its/our transformation. This family and Farm are

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[75] For they are certainly under no obligation to do so.

blessed with multitudes of kin and kith who love this place and can be trusted to practice and pass along rituals developed across generations for connecting us to this land and its history. Us Ryders have the privilege and responsibility of maintaining, augmenting, and, when necessary, setting down these ceremonies. Generating more equitable and informed ceremony and practice with/for the Farm's dead/dying has the potential to transform the kind of community we are and the range of futures we can imagine (Kimmerer 2013, Maracle 2015). Now as always, we can neither afford to accept defeat—by abandoning this land to sale or, just as surely, by losing our tangible relationships to this place and those we share it with—nor forge ahead as if the Farm can and *ought to be* as it once was. The story I was told is changing. I choose to retell it.

I am Julia Dorothy Gibson, daughter of Henry Hall Gibson, son of Katharine Belden Ryder, daughter of Ely Morgan Talcott Ryder, son of Henry Clay Ryder, son of Colonel Stephen Ryder, son of Eleazer Ryder, who leased this land following forceful colonization and wars both of which saw the original caretakers of this grove of sycamores, rocks and fields, forest, swamp, and lake—the Wappinger and the Munsee Lenape—driven North, West, and South. Ryders have farmed this land for close to 250 years in ways both violent and loving, thoughtful and thoughtless. In recent years, organic farming has been a way for Farm and family to grow our inter- and intra-species partnerships and reconnect to the communities and ecologies that sustain this place (and us). Art and music have long flourished here, but they do not erase our mistakes. As long as the story of our past/present is incomplete, the Farm's future will be fraught. My children's children may not own this land, but they will always be tied to this place and know the responsibility of (at)tending to those who once, do, and will call(ed) it home, especially those who did/do not leave on their own terms. Loving the Farm is the work that makes us family.

# CONCLUDING REMARKS

While in the process of losing her mother and beloved bird refuge, Williams (1991, 165) asks, "How can I advocate fighting for life when I am in the tutelage of a woman who is teaching me how to let go?" I have asked myself various versions of this question throughout the course of my project. Sometimes attending to death seems inimical to the work of sowing life. There may be a time for every purpose, but perhaps there is a reason that some seasons do not touch. Then there are the days when practicing the two ethics together simply feels exhausting; staying present through someone's death can be easier if you bracket off the aftermath, at least temporarily. Finding and maintaining balance (and boundaries) between the living—practitioners included—and the dead is part of the challenge of engaging in palliative and remembrance ethics. But I also recognize another strain in Williams' question, a hint of something darker and more hopeless. Perhaps, because at times it whispers to me as well. In the face/midst of environmental injustice—whether largescale and sprawling or acutely intimate—the temptation to let death define the discourse can be strong. When one spends too much time gazing into a Palantir,[76] this move feels more like giving in to "the inevitable" than giving up.

There are those, for example, who would reframe all of environmentalism in the time of climate change as death midwifery and mourning. Apparently, not only is the Anthropocene an apocalyptic event but the fulfillment of converging eschatological narratives. Forget about lost causes versus strongholds, all salmon—Atlantic and Pacific alike—are equally doomed. We must accept this sad truth and tend to them (and ourselves) through these end days. But while

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[76] In Tolkien's (1954-5) Middle Earth, the Palantiri were magical scrying stones whose power fell into the hands of the Necromancer and, thereafter, drove those who looked into them to madness/hopelessness with twisted, selective visions of past, present, and future.

this so-called realism purports to be about letting go of past ecologies, species, lifeways, etc., the futures imagined by such approaches are oriented just thoroughly around The Past as in traditional environmentalism. For, in this context, the total loss of past/present environs and partners equates to the negation of *any* environmental future. Once again, we witness the spectacle of apocalypse as viewed from the rapidly shrinking (topographical, not moral) high ground. Here we have Denethor and Saruman atop their high towers looking down and out through their supposedly prophetic stones, appreciating neither their positionality nor who is molding the narrative they are glutfully imbibing. In addition to consigning many more beings/entities to inevitably unjust deaths than is warranted at this time, these death ethics/politics ignore "outlying" survivors—and through them the transformative futures they could inhabit—in much the same way as the dying/dead found themselves beneath notice prior to the Anthropocene. Thus, when engaging in or supporting the work of palliation and remembrance, environmental ethics in the time of climate change needs to be just as wary of tragic apocalyptic framings as it does of the comic apocalyptic tropes and temporalities of mainstream environmentalism.

To avoid this unfortunate pendulum swing, I have relied primarily on (post)apocalyptic narratives and practices that neither assume environmental apocalypse hasn't already happened (or isn't happening again) nor that the world on the other side will lie in ruins if things cannot be roughly as they were/are. Each imparts crucial guidance for "dancing with disaster" from various elevations, in particular those most vulnerable to global climate change—as well as environmental justice more broadly—in the past, present, and future (Rigby 2015). While these texts do not overlook the dead and the dying in favor of the living, neither is death allowed to define the futurities imagined and supported by these narratives and practices. Indeed, Williams

asks herself the question above so that she can find a way to *answer* it rather than abandon the living. Characters and practitioners alike may sometimes struggle with the weight of palliation and remembrance, but they do not allow themselves or their futures to be utterly consumed by the work. Given that most of the narratives/practices I rely upon originate within communities that know environmental injustice far better than they'd like, I regard this refusal to give in/up as having particular political salience. With holistic palliators and remembrancers such as these, what excuses could privileged environmentalists possibly proffer?

Ultimately, this project has sought to highlight and further develop climate change ethics and politics organized around priorities/eventualities other than pulling ourselves back from "the brink" or getting swept over it. Though deeply concerned with the mainstream environmental discourse's long neglect of the dead and the dying, I am not interested in simply swapping these roles and emphasizing death at the expense of survivors and survivance (Vizenor 2008). Situating remembrance and palliation amidst justice for the living and those yet-to-be is one way in which the texts I rely upon clearly resist such hopelessness. Their exploration of (post)apocalypse as both tragic and potentially liberatory is another. In both ways, these texts demonstrate how environmentalism can grapple with being a "crisis discipline" much as other social justice discourses do—by learning to build towards liberatory futures/worlds against the backdrop of irreparable moral failure alongside those, both living and dead, who have been failed. Thus, through "visionary" narrative and practice I have come to understand the work of attending to the dying and the dead of global climate change as part of transformative environmental justice (Brown and Imarisha 2015).[77] Only with the dying and the dead can we

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[77] In their anthology *Octavia's Brood: Science Fiction Stories from Social Justice Movements*, Adrienne Maree Brown and Walidah Imarisha (2015, 4) develop the term "visionary fiction" to "distinguish science fiction that has relevance towards building new, freer worlds from the mainstream strain of science fiction, which most often reinforces dominant narratives of power."

hope to determine who/what we labor to sustain or preserve, strive to change, work to remember, choose to forget, and usher towards their endings.

The temporalities required for this holistic, intergenerational, and interspecies work are far from linear or oriented around a fixed focal point in the past or otherwise. Put another way, expanding environmental temporality reveals ethics for the dead, the living/dying, and those yet-to-be as inextricable rather than separate practices. The pursuit of transformative futurities and ecologies cannot afford to fetishize and/or forget the past, especially when it comes to global climate change and other complex, largescale environmental injustices. Moving forward we must be more wary than ever of the totalizing temporal thinking that undergirds so much of mainstream environmental ethics and politics. Rather, temporal contextualization, plurality, and accountability must be hallmarks of environmental justice in the time of climate change.

And though holistic storytellers, practitioners, and theorists should eschew the violent, past-oriented project of environmental necromancy, these more expansive temporalities may give us reason to hope that remembrance could, under the right circumstances, lead to rebirth. Kimmerer (2013, 291) reflects, "Old-growth cultures, like old-growth forests, have not been exterminated. The land holds their memory and the possibility of regeneration." If working with environmental ethics in/across time is not so linear, then perhaps working with death need not be either. Near the end of his battle with AIDS, poet Melvin Dixon (1993) wrote, "My life is closing. Oh, I know all the clichés: 'We all have to die' and 'Everything comes to an end.' But when is an ending a closure and when does closure become a new beginning? Not always. It is not automatic. We have to work at it. If an end is termination, closure involves the will to remember, which gives new life to memory." Whether it sparks new beginnings or not, death ethics require closure. The work that remembrancers do towards and with this closure may vary,

but these power dynamics must depart radically from those of necromancy. As Kimmerer reminds us, we are not in control of our ecological partners; "What we are in control of is our relationship to the earth" (336). For the sake of both this larger partnership and those who have suffered under its neglect and distortion, it is time for us to start rebuilding our relationships with the dying and the dead.

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