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Post-Apocalyptic Narratives of Survival

Master's thesis in English Literature
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Abstract

This project argues that climate fiction plays an important role in resisting defeatist attitudes to global warming and in teaching how to live in an Anthropocene era. Specifically, the thesis investigates how diverse climate fiction novels, Indra Sinha's *Animal's People* and Octavia E. Butler's *Parable of the Sower*, model methods of resistance and survival in an Anthropocene era of ecological crisis. Framed by ecofeminist and environmental humanities theory, the central argument of this thesis is that the apocalyptic plot in Sinha and Butler's texts exposes and challenges the capitalist structures of violence and exploitation that produce catastrophes in the novels. As such, it functions as a catalyst for change and explores new ways of creating a sustainable future. The thesis is divided into three chapters. "Fiction and Theories of the Anthropocene" provides an overview of different understandings of the Anthropocene as a narrative concept; "Whose Apocalypse?" offers an analysis of the competing framings of the apocalypse; and, finally, "Life in the Ruins" explores strategies of resistance offered by each novel.

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I would also like to thank the people at the Department of Language and Literature's Master's Workshop for the support throughout the process, as well as the organisers and participants of this year's Gender Masters Workshop for their useful feedback and comments on my work.

Finally, to my boyfriend, for being there through the ups and downs of this project – thank you, this would have been a lot harder without you.

"People have changed the climate of the world. Now they're waiting for the old days to come back."

–Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower*

"We are the People of the Apokalis. Tomorrow there will be more of us."

–Indra Sinha, *Animal's People*

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Introduction

"What kinds of human disturbance can life on earth bear?" Anna Tsing et al. ask in a recently published collection of essays on living in symbiosis with other species through climate change ("Haunted Landscapes" G1).[1] As forests and species disappear, resources dwindle, and pollution levels rise along with sea levels and temperatures, it is not difficult to get the impression that the world is coming to an end. In the words of Donna Haraway, "The edge of extinction is not just a metaphor; system collapse is not a thriller. Ask any refugee of any species" ("Anthropocene" 161). We – humans – inhabit an Anthropocene era, a time characterised by vast environmental changes, where the main force determining the future of the planet and its species is us (Tsing et al. "Haunted Landscapes" G1). Yet this "we" is not uncomplicated. Although the Anthropocene provides a useful tool for thinking about climate change, it fails to take into account the greater role certain humans, societies, economic systems, and ways of thinking about the environment have played in bringing about this change. Also, the vastness of the Anthropocene narrative erases the diversity of experience that characterises life with and through catastrophe. In an era of environmental crisis that threatens the future liveability of the planet, this project asks what climate fiction (cli-fi) can tell us about the "we" of the Anthropocene and its destruction and about what kind of life on earth humans can bear.

Writers often turn to apocalyptic narratives to represent the immensity of the Anthropocene and its many crises. In fact, according to Jill Lepore, we are currently experiencing a "golden age for dystopian fiction" (n.p.) Many recent novels imagine post-apocalyptic worlds in which a few isolated human survivors of a major catastrophe barely manage in a dystopian landscape, and none of these stories has a happy ending.[2] Lepore argues that the fear of the future inspired by climate change has ruined our ability to hope for a life in or beyond the Anthropocene. The sense of powerlessness inspired by apocalyptic stories inhibits action and change by leaving readers feeling insignificant and unable to act. But we, as a species, as societies, and as individual human beings, also need stories that offer

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[1] Tsing et al.'s work is divided into two thematic sections, one beginning in each end of the book. Texts examining the theme of "Monsters" – species entangled with other species – have been given page numbers beginning with "M", whereas texts examining the theme of "Ghosts" – remnants of the past that still haunt present landscapes – have been given page numbers beginning with "G".
[2] See, for example, Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006), which has won multiple awards for its story of a father and son trekking through a post-apocalyptic wasteland of murder, cannibalism, and despair. Their hopeless journey ends in death and offers no strategies for survival after catastrophe. Another popular example would be Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam*-series (2003-2013), in which most of humanity – and all of human society – is eradicated by a deliberately engineered pandemic. An older but very well-known novel is Nevil Shute's *On the Beach* (1957), in which nuclear fallout devastates the entire globe and the few survivors choose to commit suicide rather than succumb to the radiation. Recent films, television series, and computer games are rife with similarly pessimistic depictions of disaster.

strategies for survival, resistance, and hope. In the words of Timothy Morton, "the strongly held belief that the world is about to end ... is paradoxically one of the most powerful factors that inhibit a full engagement with our ecological coexistence here on Earth" (6-7). After all, if the world is already ending, then what is the point in taking action or preparing for the future?

To combat such pessimism, environmental humanities theory and some Anthropocene literary narratives describe the "Holocene entanglements that we need to survive" ("Tsing et al. Haunted Landscapes" G2), in other words the essential connections between humans in Western societies and human and non-human others across the world.[3] For example, recent work done in the environmental humanities has identified the instrumentalist relationship to non-human nature characteristic of capitalist culture as playing a key role in generating ecological crisis (Moore "The Capitalocene" 598; Plumwood 4; Whyte "Our Ancestors' Dystopia" 213). For one, Val Plumwood argues that the extreme separation of nature and humans in the West results in a "hyperbolised autonomy," a belief in a possibility of complete independence (4). This belief blinds us to the reality that interdependency with human and non-human others is needed for our survival in the Anthropocene. In order to find ways to address the present and future crises of our own making, we in the capitalist West therefore need stories that acknowledge, explore, and most importantly draw from the interdependent and entangled relationships between human and non-human beings. The title of Tsing et al.'s collaborative work is suggestive of the strategies needed to thrive in an Anthropocene era. According to her and her collaborators, humans must learn the "arts of living on a damaged planet" (n.p.).

Climate fiction literature that imagines the possibility of living through the end of the world alongside human and non-human others offers stories that teach these arts. According to Stephanie LeMenager, by narrating what she calls the "everyday Anthropocene," cli-fi novels model potential methods for "thriving and surviving" in an era of climate change (223). Thus cli-fi literature, apocalyptic, futuristic or contemporary, is crucial to our

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[3] Throughout this thesis, I use the terms "Western" and "capitalist" societies as shorthand to refer primarily to the affluent West-European and North American countries that laid the groundwork for the development of those cultures and systems of economics across the globe. Of course, the implied internal unanimity of these terms risks erasing the experiences of marginalised groups within the West and ignores the entirety of the socialist Eastern European block and its history of ecological disasters. Uncritical use of such terms often ignores the climate change experiences of for instance people of colour and indigenous peoples within the United States and other Western societies. It is therefore important to keep in mind that inequalities of power and exposure to environmental crises will always exist within societies and cultures.

reimagining of climate change and strategies of living. Therefore, this thesis explores how recent novels of post-apocalyptic survival challenge the Anthropocene's end-of-all-life narrative by engaging with themes of interdependency and co-existence in the aftermath of catastrophes.

Two very different novels will illustrate the complicated spatial and temporal dimensions of climate change that the Anthropocene narrative obscures. First is Octavia E. Butler's futuristic speculative fiction, *Parable of the Sower.* Second is Indra Sinha's more realist novel, *Animal's People,* alluding to the 1984 pesticide plant explosion in Bhopal in India. My choice to work with these novels set, alternately, in the future and in the present was deliberate. Butler's novel, published over two decades ago, imagines a world in which a young girl of colour, Lauren, builds a community based on the acceptance of change in the ruins of a collapsing United States. Lauren's "hyperempathy syndrome," her ability to feel the pain and pleasure of others, lets her establish a new religion, Earthseed, that stresses interdependency and adaptation in response to catastrophe. This way, her condition becomes not a disability but rather a new tool that enables survival. Sinha's novel, on the other hand, is set in present-day India, an unusual location for post-apocalyptic storytelling. Alluding to an actual environmental disaster that took place in 1984, it depicts the story of a young boy, Animal, orphaned and deformed during infancy by the major industrial disaster. As a result of his disability, he struggles to articulate his identity as human, while his community seeks justice against the American company that ended their world. Like Butler's protagonist, Animal's ability to hear the thoughts of human and non-human others is a central method of resistance that lets him form a community of survivors. Both novels are told from a first-person perspective as Animal and Lauren reclaim narrative agency to resist the sense of powerlessness inspired by the Anthropocene. Unlike many dystopian narratives, these novels are committed to what Haraway calls to "stay with the trouble" ("Introduction 1), that is the difficult but crucial project of making a life in a world of ecological crises and entangled dependencies on others.

How can these stories help prepare humanity for survival in the ruins of capitalism? Throughout, my argument is that cli-fi novels of post-apocalyptic survival demonstrate important methods of resilience in the Anthropocene by showing humans surviving alongside human and non-human others following ecological devastation. There are three parts to this discussion. In chapter one, "Fiction and Theories of the Anthropocene," I explore different narratives – some of them more apocalyptic than others – that the environmental humanities

currently use to interpret ecological crises. While these narratives all highlight different features of humans' role in creating climate change, some of them are more useful than others when it comes to creating a culture of Anthropocene survival. Since narratives of post-apocalyptic survival are especially important, in chapter two, "Whose Apocalypse?" I turn to a reading of Butler and Sinha's cli-fi novels that questions the responsibility for the apocalyptic narrative by emphasising capitalist societies' tendency to deny responsibility for the dystopian conditions of other societies. This reading emphasises how Western societies' exploitation of the other creates an inherently violent and (self-)destructive culture and argues that the first-person narratives of Lauren and Animal play an important role in resisting this violence. In chapter three, "Life in the Ruins," I turn to the question of how such acts of resistance contribute to teaching humans "the arts of living on a damaged planet" and reflect on the role of literary narratives in this process (Tsing et al.).

Chapter 1: Fiction and Theories of the Anthropocene

Diverse climate fiction novels play an important part in imagining life in the wake of catastrophe. Written in 1993, Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower* is a speculative novel about a young girl trying to survive and create change in a dystopian future shaped by climate crisis and social fragmentation.[4] Lauren Oya Olamina is an African American preacher's daughter who lives in a gated community in Los Angeles called Robledo, inhabited mostly by black and Hispanic families. The neighbourhood is one of the few remaining safe havens that keep middle-class citizens safe from resource scarcity and climate crisis, as well as from the beggars, burglars, and pyromaniac drug-addicts that inhabit the streets outside. Lauren suffers from a condition called "hyperempathy syndrome," which makes her feel the pain and pleasure of those around her. Amidst the mounting violence that constantly threatens to break down the walls of the neighbourhood, she struggles to accept both her father's belief that a higher power will restore order, and her friends' and neighbours' belief that a return to the past is possible. Because of her hyperempathy, she begins to use her journal and poetry writing to develop her own belief system, called Earthseed, which holds that "God Is Change" and adaptation is the only reliable method of survival in unstable times (Butler 3). The novel consists of a series of her journal entries. Initially a record of her attempts to prepare her community for crisis, Lauren's diary later becomes a survival manual, as well as the story of her journey north in search of a better future for her and the followers she gathers around Earthseed.

Indra Sinha's *Animal's People* situates the apocalypse in a different place and time. Published fourteen years later in 2007, the novel follows the story of an Indian boy orphaned and crippled by a cataclysmic urban industrial disaster that took the lives of thousands of people, poisoned the land around the city, and left sixty thousand survivors suffering from bleeding lungs and eyes (Mukherjee 216). While the story is set in the fictional city of Khaufpur, the allusion to the actual industrial disaster in Bhopal in India that took place on December 2, 1984 is clear. On that day, Sinha writes, "history finished without warning when no one was expecting it" (272).[5] The novel offers a fictionalized account of the disaster that ocurred when a pesticide factory run by the multinational corporation Union Carbide released

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[4] The novel is part of an unfinished trilogy, but I have chosen to focus on the first novel in the series due to its closer engagement with environmental themes. The second novel, *Parable of the Talents*, pays more attention to the political consequences of societal collapse. Its plot centres around the resurgence of slavery as US society is rebuilt on a foundation of religious and political extremism. The third novel, *Parable of the Trickster,* was intended to move the series' plot into space and follow Lauren's community as it struggles to survive on a new planet. It was unfortunately never finished as Butler shifted her attention to other projects.

[5] The quote is taken from Sinha's novel and actually refers to the catastrophe that occurred in his fictional city Khaufpur.

"a deadly cocktail of toxic gases" onto the streets of the city (Mukherjee 216).[6] Sinha himself

has actively campaigned for the rights of the poison victims since 1993, first as an activist,

later as a writer (Moss n.p.). Most importantly then, his semi-realist novel situates the

apocalypse in the past and dystopia in the present, which makes *Animal's People* both a work

of fiction and of investigative journalism. Animal, the novel's protagonist and narrator, lives

in Khaufpur (based on the actual town of Bhopal). He represents those who have been bent –

in his case literally – by the capitalist violence visited upon the city by the Union Carbide

corporation, referred to in the book only as the generic Kampani. Born just a few days prior to

the catastrophic gas leak, Animal's spine was violently twisted by the factory's poisons, and

now, almost twenty years old, he is unable to even remember a time when he walked on two

legs or considered himself human. Lonely, sex-obsessed, and haunted by self-loathing and by

the voices of the poison's ghosts, Animal has made the city's streets and the ruins of the old

factory his home. His story, told through a series of audio tapes recorded on a machine stolen

from an investigative journalist, follows Animal's inner journey toward self-acceptance.

Meanwhile, he becomes involved with his activist friends Zafar and Nisha's efforts in

building a final court case against the Kampani, which much like its real-world equivalent,

Union Carbide, refuses to take responsibility for the accident, its victims, or the ecological

devastation that it caused.

As an era of increasingly extreme weather, rising sea levels and temperatures, as well

as accelerating species and ecosystem losses, the Anthropocene "projects violence into the

future" and inspires apocalyptic thinking (Armiero and De Angelis 357). Therefore, the

Anthropocene is closely connected to the idea of apocalypse found in much of recent

dystopian cli-fi fiction such as *Parable of the Sower* and *Animal's People*. Like contemporary

environmental humanities theories, these texts locate tragedy, dystopia, and disaster in

different places and times. Therefore, such cli-fi novels play an important role in showing that

the apocalypse is neither final nor universal. Through their intimate first-person narratives,

they demonstrate strategies of resistance and survival in the ruins of catastrophe in a way that

the sciences or theory alone are unable to articulate. After all, the Anthropocene's scientific

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[6] A more detailed account of the background for, and the events of, the disaster can be found in Stuart Diamond's *New Yorker* article from 1985, where he describes the precise operating failures and errors that caused the disaster. Of particular interest is the extreme inferiority of safety procedures in the Indian factory compared to its US counterparts. Investigations into Union Carbide's fatal neglect of the factory, he writes, "produced evidence of at least 10 violations of the standard procedures of both the parent corporation and its Indian-run subsidiary" (n.p.).

narrative of "universal truths" leaves very little room for the "nuisances of the specific" (346), which we must find in fiction instead.

Already in 1989, science fiction writer Ursula Le Guin was writing about the need for stories of steady survival and care to counter the spectacle inherent to stories that involve heroism, conquest, and violence. In her "carrier-bag theory of fiction," she advocates a concept of storytelling comparable to a bag, a tool for gathering resources, which is less captivating, perhaps, but much more useful.[7] Like carrier-bag fiction, the two cli-fi novels I discuss offer strategies of post-apocalyptic survival and resistance that are based on principles of solidarity rather than the violence often seen in typical dystopian narratives. They depict different catastrophic scenarios and viable methods for survival and resistance in an increasingly hostile environment. They also offer diverse accounts of the location and timing of the Anthropocene. In other words, climate-focused literature about many different places and in different genres, speculative and realist, futuristic and focused on the past, offers new definitions of the Anthropocene and new ways of thinking about strategies for inhabiting an uncertain present and future. Not less important, it has modelled and pioneered the different concepts of the Anthropocene, which, in turn, have transformed the environmental humanities' discourse on the subject (Nixon; Tsing et al.; Haraway "Introduction"). The Anthropocene is, after all, a much-debated term, which has been criticised for "[erasing] hierarchies, power relations, and historical inequalities" (Armiero and De Angelis 346).

It is clear therefore that stories perform a crucial function in guiding our thinking about climate change and humans′ place in a world determined by crisis. Knowing this, the question that remains to be answered is which and whose stories to listen to. After all, there are many different kinds of stories told, and while some of them ″help us notice; others get in our way″ (Tsing, et al. ″Bodies″ M8). This chapter questions the Anthropocene as a ″grand narrative″ (Armiero and De Angelis 346), whose assumption of universal human responsibility for climate change plays a major role in obscuring the root causes of dystopian conditions in the present and future, and in impeding the development of viable strategies of survival. Who are ″we″ in the Anthropocene? All humans, or only certain societies? Several

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[7] I am referring to Le Guin's essay from 1989 titled "The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction," which has recently been a topic for discussion in the environmental humanities through the work of Tsing et al. and Haraway (Tsing et al. "Bodies" M10; Haraway "Otherworldly Conversations" 160). The essay was originally intended as a critique of dominant forms of masculine storytelling, which focus on heroes (or hunters, in Le Guin's metaphor) historically has had a tendency to appropriate the narratives and erase the contributions of women (gatherers) (Le Guin 167). However, the alternate methods of feminist storytelling suggested by Le Guin in the essay are also applicable to narratives that take into account non-human others (Haraway "Otherworldly Conversations" 160).

critics, among them Kyle Powys Whyte, have identified colonialism and capitalism as playing decisive roles in creating the "carbon-intensive economics" that continue to "produce the drivers of anthropogenic climate change" in the present ("Indigenous Climate Change" 154). In his view, the capitalist emphasis on technological progress and profit has laid the groundwork for what we currently know as the Anthropocene, and it will continue to threaten the future liveability of the planet as long as no change takes place. The key to conceiving of the necessary adaptations predicated by climate change lies in stories that imagine survival beyond the apocalyptic events of the Anthropocene and outside the capitalist system's solutions. Whyte therefore urges scholars to turn to indigenous storytellers who have already lived through and survived the apocalypse for knowledge ("Our Ancestors' Dystopia" 208). Meanwhile, others point out to climate fiction as another source because of literature's ability to bring to life diverse experiences of living through crisis. Therefore, this chapter explores different narratives that both acknowledge global warming as a result of capitalist action (and inaction) in response to a changing climate and pave the way for imaginings of effective survival strategies in the present and future grounds of catastrophe.

In order to understand the narrative of apocalypse that determines Western societies' understanding of the climate crisis, it is necessary to account for the current geological definition of the period – the Anthropocene – which is beginning to resemble the dystopian futures often imagined by writers of climate fiction. The term was coined in the 1980s by Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer to describe the present geological era in which the human impact on earth has reached a scale in which it is observably changing the environments and ecosystems of the planet (Heise 3; Nixon 12; Menley and Taylor 3). The characteristics of such a definition of the Anthropocene are changes in climate, losses in biodiversity, rising levels of pollution, and a prevalence of extreme weather. While not yet an official geological term, the concept is steadily gaining popularity within the sciences as a useful tool for thinking about the current state of the world.[8] However, it has also become a byword for the possible future destruction of that world as a result of human action and inaction in response to crisis. The Anthropocene era is not a recent phenomenon. However, until recent decades there has not been much awareness of the extent to which practises such as industry,

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[8] The question of the Anthropocene's status as an official geographical period is a complicated one. Officially, humans are presently inhabiting the Holocene, and have been since the last ice age almost twelve thousand years ago. However, the Anthropocene has gained popularity as a buzzword because the Holocene period fails to reflect the recent major impacts humans have had on the planet through mass extinctions, pollution, emissions, and other effects of climate change. On the other hand, the term has been criticised for its lack of basis in scientific fact. A more thorough discussion can be found in Joseph Stromberg's article in *Smithsonian Magazine*.

increasing use of fossil fuels, and excessive consumption of resources – just to name a few – are changing the planet's environment beyond the point of no return. With this awareness comes a realisation that what Plumwood calls the "rationalist" cultures of the West may not have as much control over the environment as we thought (4), and that anthropogenic climate change may have the potential to determine not only our own future, but the futures of all the human and non-human others who share the planet with us. In this context, the Anthropocene can be used as a narrative for developing an understanding of the role played by humans in causing the climate crisis.[9]

Thus, while the Anthropocene is a useful concept when it comes to opening a dialogue about human impacts on the planet and changing conditions for survival, it is not an unproblematic concept with which to describe the present era. Because of its focus on unimaginably large global effects, it is a story uniquely suited to generating hopelessness and inaction, rather than the radical change and solutions that are urgently needed. After all, the Anthropocene narrative is one of imminent and unpreventable catastrophe, caused by humans' inherent inability to coexist sustainably with their environment and with each other. There are other reasons why the Anthropocene proves an insufficient narrative with which to prepare Western societies for dealing with climate crisis. First and foremost, the Anthropocene presents ecological crises as a universal human responsibility and argues that all humans suffer equally from the effects of environmental devastation. The sweeping generalisations inherent in the narrative ignore the role played by Western capitalist societies in draining the planet's resources and in polluting its air, water, and land. These problems combine to make the Anthropocene what Carolyn Merchant calls a declensionist narrative, that is a typical Western narrative that imagines ecological disaster and apocalyptic destruction as the inevitable conclusion to a "decline from a prior golden age," where rational man was more in control of nature (154).[10] By giving the impression that climate crisis is the natural end result

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[9] For this reason, I use "Anthropocene" throughout this thesis to refer to the present era of anthropogenic climate crises while remaining aware of its associated problems. As Tsing et al. put it in their introduction, "Our use of the term "Anthropocene" does not imagine a homogenous human race. We write in dialogue with those who remind readers of unequal relations among humans, industrial ecologies, and human insignificance in the web of life by writing instead of Capitalocene, Plantationocene, or Chthulucene" ("Haunted Landscapes" G3). Similarly, Jason Moore points out that his critique of the term is "not an argument about replacing one word with another, but about describing what the Anthropocene perspective does not – and cannot" ("Cheap Nature" 81).

[10] Merchant's critique of the Western declensionist narrative originates in a discussion of European origin stories, which she notes narrate humanity's fall from – rather than entrance into – paradise (133). Based on such a beginning, there is little wonder that "the story of Western civilization since the seventeenth century … can be conceptualised as a grand narrative of fall and recovery" in which science and progress are always called upon to return humanity to its place in the "garden" (133-134). The garden of course represents a cultivated planet under human (capitalist) control.

of human life on earth, the Anthropocene is, as Eileen Crist puts it, "a reflection and reinforcement of the anthropocentric actionable worldview that generated the Anthropocene – with all its looming emergencies – in the first place" (14).

      The problem with the Anthropocene then, is that it blames "humanity" for setting into motion the effects of events like climate change, without taking into account the nuances of human history. When it comes to creating effective strategies for dealing with ecological crisis, it is not enough to name the entire species as a culprit.[11] It neither offers suggestions for dealing with the crisis, nor contributes to mitigating its effects. The fact is that as long as Western societies continue to deny the role their industry and capitalism have played in setting into motion the Anthropocene, it will be very difficult to take effective measure against climate crisis. As Jason Moore puts it in his critique of the Anthropocene narrative, "[t]he Anthropocene sounds the alarm ...[b]ut it cannot explain how these alarming changes came about" ("Introduction" 5). Both Morton, Moore, and Whyte make excellent points about the problems with the narrative when they discuss the beginnings of the Anthropocene. Morton, for one, argues that the world ended already in April 1784, referring to the precise moment when James Watt patented the steam engine and began an era characterised by massive depositions of carbon in the planet's surface (8). The steam engine symbolises industrial capitalism and its alienating and unsustainable culture of progress, efficiency, and control. Similarly, Moore highlights the futility of trying to explain present changes to the climate without taking into account "how they fit into patterns of power, capital and nature established some four centuries earlier" at the commencement of the capitalist system of economics ("The Capitalocene" 596).[12] Whyte goes even further back in time when he explicitly links climate change to the first colonisation of indigenous peoples ("Indigenous Climate Change" 154). Taking all of their arguments into account, it becomes clear that the

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[11] I do not discuss this in my thesis but it is important to note that Menley and Taylor write that "[w]hat such criticism of the Anthropos overlooks, however, is that for scientists the designation of a single species as an agent is a specifying move rather than a universalizing one. The point is not that all humans are transforming the Earth system, but that a single species in the biosphere is transforming the planet, a significant event in geologic time" (9). While this is an interesting perspective, I focus more on the cultural than scientific aspects of the Anthropocene. After all, cultural and literary studies require greater precision than the sciences when it comes to defining concrete agents of change, violence, or destruction.

[12] To Moore, this distinction is crucial because "how one answers the historical question shapes one's analysis of – and response to – the crises of the present" ("The Capitalocene" 596). He questions and criticises the dating of the Anthropocene's beginning to the industrial revolution because such a narrative ignores the long colonial history of capitalism before coal and steam made it industrial. According to him, capitalism – and therefore the Anthropocene – began "in the era of Columbus," when European societies began what he calls "its extraordinary reshaping of global natures" (596). Therefore, all of capitalism's history must be taken into account when speaking of the generation of present crises.

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Anthropocene cannot be sufficiently explained without examining the role played by specifically capitalist ways of inhabiting the earth. Sinha's and Butler's novels rectify this by explicitly identifying capitalism as the origin of environmental destruction.

The need for a different story to better articulate the patterns of power implicated in ecological crises has generated a profusion of different terms and narratives that better reflect the nuances of both past and present changes to the environment. Moore, for one, has advocated that we refer instead to the present era as the Capitalocene, thus highlighting the role played by capitalist economics in creating a culture whose exploitative relationship to non-human nature (and to some people) is fundamentally unsustainable ("The Capitalocene" 596). This narrative shifts the focus from future consequences to past causes and takes into account the neo-colonial implications of climate change that play such a major role in Sinha's novel. It makes no efforts to obscure the inequalities hidden by the Anthropocene's universal human "we," instead inviting consideration of the temporal and geographic distributions of – not to mention the responsibility for – the apocalyptic events of global warming. According to Moore, the distinction between Anthropocene and Capitalocene matters because the former "makes for an easy story," which amounts to letting "the rich and powerful create problems for all of us, then tell us we're all to blame" ("Cheap Nature" 82; "The Capitalocene" 599). There is no question that the nuances found in less generalising narratives such as the Capitalocene are crucial when it comes to including the voices of marginalised groups that struggle to be heard within the discourses of Western capitalist societies. It is not without reason that Whyte has written extensively on the specific challenges experienced by indigenous peoples who have lived with climate crises for centuries. As he puts it, the Anthropocene is too imprecise for most indigenous groups because the story it tells makes it "sound like all humans are implicated in and affected by colonialism, capitalism and industrialization in the same ways," which of course is not the case ("Indigenous Climate Change" 159).

By adding the nuances of the Capitalocene concept to the more general Anthropocene, capitalist culture's role in shaping the dystopian present of human and non-human others across the planet becomes apparent. However, this story remains an imposing and distant narrative, on a scale far removed from humanity itself. To remedy this, Marco Armiero and Massimo De Angelis have coined the term "Wasteocene," a narrative which focus lies not on the deposition of carbon on the earth's surface or on the developments of economics, but rather on the often-ignored effects of pollution and contamination on the human body – "who

produces garbage and who gets it" (353). Their contamination history recognises capitalism's role in the devaluation of human and non-human others that produces climate change and distributes its associated effects unequally. In their view, it is key to pay attention to the "traces of the Capitalocene" left behind "not only in geological strata but also in the biological and genetic strata of human bodies" (347-348). Sinha's novel accomplishes this through its focus on the build-up of toxicity in the bodies of the gas leak's survivors. By shifting the narrative's focus from the transformation of the planet to the transformation of its inhabitants, the Wasteocene challenges the "(in)visibility and (un)knowability" of the Anthropocene and redefines what it means to inhabit the present era in fragile and decaying bodies (347). This gives it the potential to form a new "we" made up of "resisting subjects" created by the toxicity of capitalist injustice (348, 356) – the theme of chapter three.

Adding the concepts of the Capitalocene and the Wasteocene to that of the Anthropocene leaves us with a narrative that better explains the historical, colonial, economic, and embodied nuances of climate change. Unfortunately, this narrative is still focused on the past rather than survival in the present and future. Instead, in the words of Crist, "why not choose a name whose higher calling we must rise to meet?" (27) – why not tell a story that challenges capitalist culture to change before it is too late? This is what Haraway does when she suggests the Chthulucene as a narrative with which to rethink human relationships to non-human others in the present with focus on survival ("Anthropocene" 160). To combat the apocalyptic and declensionist defeatism of the Anthropocene narrative, she proposes a method of living with crisis that is closely related to the "arts of living on a damaged planet" proposed by Tsing et al.'s work. Where other narratives of climate change often get caught up in "awful or Edenic pasts and apocalyptic or salvific futures," Haraway shifts the focus to the possibilities that arise from the entanglements of human beings with human and non-human others in the present ("Introduction" 1). The slogan of the Chthulucene is "to stay with the trouble of living and dying in response-ability on a damaged earth" and not give in to the hopelessness of some imagined future (2). After all, as "mortal critters entwined in myriad unfinished configurations of places, times, matters, meanings" (1), humans are not static prisoners of the global forces that surround them, but individuals with the potential to adapt and survive on a planet whose future liveability is no longer guaranteed.

The Chthulucene fulfils an important function by shifting the focus of climate change narratives from the future to the present and from despair to survival. Yet it lacks some of the necessary elements to tell a story that truly captivates and drives change. It has no identifiable

protagonist, no driving plot, no action – no capacity to captivate the members of Western societies and convince us that we need to change. This is where cli-fi, with its capacity for empathy and depictions of lived experiences, comes in, transcending traditional conversations about global warming. In Tsing et al.'s words, creative writing of this kind "invites us to ... hear those quiet stories about the Anthropocene whispered in small encounters" ("Bodies" M8), the individual stories obscured by the "grand narratives" of an era beyond the human capacity for comprehension (Armiero and De Angelis 346). To hear these quiet stories, to learn "the arts of living on a damaged planet," while also "staying with the trouble," requires careful listening and an avoidance of the defeatist dystopias that Lepore warns against. Such listening is challenging, but not impossible. Claire Evans, writing for *The Guardian,* believes that cli-fi is needed to engage with and make visible the present climate crisis, while showing a path toward change and survival. In her view, the right kind of story can help humans "see ourselves in the world, negotiate our way out of disaster and imagine how we might live differently" (n.p.).

The question that emerges from these different narratives is what role fiction can play in guiding a sustainable future. In other words, what stories can help guide survival instead of spreading attitudes of fear and hopelessness? A useful idea for understanding the distinction is LeMenager's concepts of "stories to die by," which treat the future apocalypse as a certain and final event, and "stories to live by," which teach survival and resilience in response to changing times (226). It is the former, as Lepore points out, that have recently dominated bestseller lists and influenced Western societies' approaches to thinking the future, whereas the latter, according to LeMenager, are more often found in the work done by "writers of color and by feminist writers and philosophers" than by white male authors (226). It is, after all, the latter group that has the most to fear, and lose, from an eventual collapse in current power structures. This means that stories of hope in the Anthropocene must be located outside what we know as the Western literary canon, a body of work that despite recent additions is still dominated by white male voices. Survival stories must be found instead in narratives by women, people of colour, as well as others who have traditionally been left out of discussions of influential works of literature in the past.

It is therefore significant that neither *Parable of the Sower* nor *Animal's People*, written by people of colour and about people of colour, among others, conform to the typically defeatist post-apocalyptic narrative of recent popularity. Instead, they tell stories of individuals who, despite struggling through catastrophic events, manage to learn how to make

a life in the ruins of their societies. Animal and Lauren are narrators whose subversive voices resist both the silencing universality of the Anthropocene and the structures of power that produce it. Their stories take place during, but are not defined by, ecological crisis. Meanwhile, their ongoing survival puts into question the apocalypse inherent to the Anthropocene narrative by proving that devastating and world-altering events are not always final. As they thus complicate both the spatial and temporal location of the apocalypse, these novels invite readers to consider the unequal distribution of the responsibility and consequences of climate change. At the same time, they challenge readers to imagine the necessary tools to make possible new methods of survival after the supposed end of the world. This way, in the words of Tobias Menley and Jesse Oak Taylor, cli-fi novels demonstrate that, "the Anthropocene is unfinished, a tale without an ending," which "will ultimately be defined not by the point at which it began, but by the conditions of life within it" (10). What those conditions will be like has yet to be determined. The stories we as a society choose to listen to will shape both the present and the future in the era we know as the Anthropocene.

Chapter 2: Whose Apocalypse?

In Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower*, her protagonist Lauren captures one of the major issues of the Anthropocene when she reflects that, "Every one knows that change is inevitable ... Change is part of life, of existence, of the common wisdom. But I don't think we're dealing with all that that means. We haven't even begun to deal with it" (20-21). As temperatures and sea levels rise, resources grow scarcer, and species go extinct, denial and defeatism come easier to the originators of these effects than a full engagement with the crisis. Despite the proliferation of terms that attempt to describe and explain the current changes, and despite the recent popularity of fiction that imagines these changes bringing about the apocalypse, very little is being done to prevent the inception of capitalism's own dystopia-in-the-making. As I argued in the previous chapter, the most mainstream understanding of the Anthropocene is a declensionist narrative. Such narratives are unfortunate because they obscure the temporal and spatial nuances of catastrophe by giving the impression that humanity as a whole is equally responsible for creating the climate crisis. The more specific narratives of the Capitalocene and the Wasteocene, and the more optimistic narrative of the Chthulucene, help mitigate the generalising effects of the Anthropocene and explain the relations of power that produce and become products of climate crises. However, as "grand narratives" they remain incapable of illustrating the individual lived experiences of the era as well as what it means to inhabit a post-apocalyptic world (Armiero and De Angelis 346). The Anthropocene is neither universal, nor final, nor – at this point – avoidable, as humanity already inhabits it and most members of the species are affected by it in numerous subtle and unsubtle ways.

　　In this chapter, I build on these assertions to argue that the apocalypse of recent cli-fi fiction signals not the end of the world but the approaching end of capitalist culture's denial of responsibility for ecological devastation. This argument emerges from an analysis of the role played by the apocalypses in both Sinha's and Butler's novels. In *Animal's People*, the temporal and spatial dimensions of the apocalypse as imagined in the West are called into question because the catastrophic event Sinha narrates is set not in the future, but in the actual past. The multinational corporation, the Kampani, inflicts violence that is neo-colonialist and capitalist in its exploitative use of Khaufpur's people to further its own profits. This violence has rendered the city of Khaufpur a dystopia that for Western readers so far only exists in the imagined realms of some dreaded distant future. Yet in contrast to most post-apocalyptic stories, the city still stands, and its people still make efforts to lead normal lives amidst the poison and disease. It is as Animal puts it, "Fucking world didn't end. It's still suffering" (Sinha 64). Meanwhile, *Parable of the Sower* exemplifies what Jim Miller calls "critical

dystopias" (339), as it represents the future that Western societies fear will mark the end result of an increasingly ruthless and unchecked capitalist economy. The gated communities that spring up in response to the mounting violence on the streets parallel capitalist societies' present displacement of climate change consequences onto societies in the Global South, illustrating how denial of responsibility inhibits progressive change. Together, the two novels demonstrate what LeMenager means when she writes that "there are people in this world who already have learned to die, and there are people who, faced with anthropogenic climate change, are only just now learning to die" (229). While Western societies fear the future apocalypse, others in the world have already experienced life with catastrophe.

Animal's People and Locations of the Apocalypse

Growing up in the slums of Khaufpur, Sinha's protagonist Animal has chosen his name not only to reflect the twisting of his back which forces him to walk on all fours, but also the distance he feels toward the "human inhumanity" that would permit such violence to be inflicted upon him (Nixon 54). He represents, in all his disfigurement and bitterness, the victims of the Wasteocene that capitalist and colonialist forces have left across the Global South. Animal's body, his city, and his community all carry traces of toxicity left behind by the Kampani corporation when it refused to clean up the site of the gas leak. What makes it worse is that there is no ending to the catastrophe or to its violence, as the remaining poison in the land and water continues to make survival for the people of Khaufpur a daily struggle against sickness, pain, and injustice. I begin by looking at Sinha's novel because it illustrates the problem with thinking that the apocalypse is an impending, exclusively future event. Unlike the speculative post-apocalyptic novels of Western origin, *Animal's People* takes place in present-day India, demonstrating that narratives that locate the end of the world in the West and in some distant and uncertain future come from a position of privilege. Because it shows current consequences of industrial capitalism, Animal's story criticises the Western declensionist narratives that enable the generation of present ecological dystopias. The questions that Sinha's novel brings up are therefore related to Whyte's concerns: "what happens to a society that has gone through an apocalyptic event?" ("Indigenous Climate Change" 159). The novel also reflects on "*who* is learning to die as a civilization" (LeMenager 228). In other words, Sinha's text asks the key question, whose apocalypse is it?

These questions can be answered by examining how Sinha's dystopian narrative deals with time and how it complicates the idea of a universal and final apocalypse. By setting the plot of his post-apocalyptic novel in the present and at the site of the Bhopal disaster, Sinha demonstrates that many societies outside the West have already undergone the catastrophic consequences of the climate crisis and managed to adapt and survive in the now hostile and toxic environment. In fact, the endurance of the people of Khaufpur (and of the actual town of Bhopal) challenges the pessimism of much of Western post-apocalyptic fiction that equates the Anthropocene's future with ceaseless catastrophes, societal collapses, and unchecked violence. For this reason, recent scholarship in the environmental humanities sees histories of indigenous survival as models for the future in the Anthropocene. In "Our Ancestors' Dystopia," Whyte explicitly states that while "others in the world dread they will face [dystopia] in the future," indigenous peoples have already had to learn how to live with

catastrophe (208-209). Having "seen the end of their respective worlds," and having "survived the apocalypse," they already know what it is to inhabit dystopia alongside the capitalist, colonialist, and industrial forces that changed their ways of life beyond recognition ("Indigenous Climate Change" 159).[13] Despite the hardships of dystopia and the apparent end of their world, they have, in Haraway's words, "not ceased ongoing worlding" ("Symbiogenesis" M44). Their unique strategies of survival and resistance, currently unknown to Western societies, like Animal's own resilience, shows that the apocalypse is not final. Its aftermath will require new ways of living.

Keeping Whyte's theory of living in a present-day dystopia in mind, it is clear that Sinha's novel engages critically with the Western post-apocalyptic genre. It shows that the apocalypse does not happen everywhere simultaneously, but instead has complicated temporal and geographical locations. Sinha demonstrates the problem of thinking about the apocalypse as a universal event through Ma Franci, the old French nun that raised Animal after he was found abandoned on a doorstep after the catastrophe. In her old age, she is convinced that the impending apocalypse is about to lay waste to the entire world. According to her beliefs, the gas leak in Khaufpur was an expression of God's wrath and represented only the beginning of a much more wide-reaching global "Apokalis" designed to put an end to humanity and its sins (Sinha 63). "Don't you see," she questions Animal, "the Apokalis has already begun? It started on that night in Khaufpur ... Round the world it will go" (63). She appears unable to understand that the apocalypse came specifically to Khaufpur and not, for instance, Washington DC because of how neo-colonialist exploitation distributes violence and pollution. However, despite her many delusions and misunderstandings, she makes a valid point when she identifies the apocalypse as an event that transpires at different times in different places. This spatial and temporal dispersion indicates that it is only a matter of time before anthropogenic environmental crises begin to affect the West as well. Thus, the dread capitalist societies now experience is a response to the consequences of several centuries of exploitation of human and non-human others across the globe finally catching up to them (Whyte "Indigenous Climate Change" 159).

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[13] A more in-depth discussion of history lies outside the scope of this thesis, but I still want to note that Whyte's argument about indigenous survival builds on the idea that the current climate crisis is actually an "intensification of environmental change imposed on Indigenous peoples by colonialism" ("Indigenous Climate Change" 155). As he explains it, colonialism and capitalism both originate in Western societies' systematic exploitation of the other, and together they have produced the industrialisation that drives climate change and other catastrophic effects. Therefore, "Indigenous persons and allies examine climate change less as a future trend, and more as the experience of going *back to the future*" (156).

Sinha critiques the dystopian elements of Western culture that produce present dystopias for indigenous peoples and other marginalised groups. Through his novel, he demonstrates the consequences that unsustainable capitalist practises have already in the present. The people of Khaufpur, who survived the gas leak and continue to inhabit the city despite its toxicity, cannot understand Ma's belief in the catastrophe as a world-ending event. To them, the "Apokalis" represented not a universal end of the world but rather a specific act of violence inflicted upon them by the Kampani and its representatives. What the eventual dispersion of catastrophes demonstrates is that the gas leak in Khaufpur (or Bhopal) was less of a freak accident or an expression of divine punishment than a result of systemic patterns of capitalist violence. This reading of the catastrophe is supported by S. Ravi Rajan's analysis of the violence behind the actual Bhopal disaster. He points out that catastrophic environmental violence is inevitable when corporations operating in poor areas are more powerful than the local populations of those places (389). According to Rajan, the gas leak was not an isolated accident or exception but rather a "potent microcosm of a more general global trend of environmental violence" that makes human lives expendable (385).[14] It is a well-documented problem that transnational corporations such as Union Carbide are able to displace the environmental consequences of their unsustainable operations onto the people living in poverty in the slums of the Global South (Nixon 46). Rob Nixon refers to this systematic displacement of consequences as the "environmentalism of the poor," a structure in which "those people lacking resources" – and therefore the capacity to produce the Capitalocene – become the "principal casualties" of environmental destruction and violence (4). The result is that environmental disasters hit hardest in under-resourced areas inhabited by the poor and by people of colour.

Following, it is clear that Capitalocene forces brought the apocalypse to Khaufpur and created a real-life dystopia for the survivors. In the novel, these global structures of violence and injustice are represented in the "Kampani," the nondescript name of which is significant in a number of ways. Its non-specificity simultaneously indicates both the company responsible for the conditions in Khaufpur, as well as a much wider pattern of foreign multinational companies whose conduct threatens human and non-human life at the sites in which they operate. At the same time, the name highlights the faceless anonymity of the

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[14] The Bhopal crisis functions as an example in Rajan's wider discussion of the "metaphysics" of structural violence. Among other things, he argues that crises like Bhopal are important objects of study not only as specific catastrophes but also as examples of how environmental violence manifests in the Global South as a result of capitalist and industrial technologies.

corporation that complicates the poison survivors' continued efforts toward redress. Like the capitalist system that it represents, the Kampani is impossible to get a hold of because it defies concrete identification. This is why the trial against the Kampani is never concluded, while the "bosses" hide far away in "Amrika" and refuse to accept Khaufpur's jurisdiction or even make an appearance in court (Sinha 33). Fighting an entity that cannot be directly faced tests the group of Khaufpur activists who keep the endless trials against the Kampani going. In a fevered dream brought on by Animal's attempts to poison him over their romantic rivalry, the activist Zafar encounters a crow that offers to show him the face of his enemy. Zafar is driven to despair as the crow only shows him "a city of tall buildings … bleak, windowless, formed of grey concrete," filled with lawyers, doctors, researchers, engineers, chemists, advertisers, public relations consultants, and directors (228-229). There is no one person, not even one specific nation, to blame for the multinational corporation's actions, and the responsibility for the disaster is continuously and endlessly relocated. According to Andrew Mahlstedt, this makes the Kampani almost "a parody of an evil, global capitalism" that is simultaneously invisible to and blind to its victims (63). This way, the Kampani continues to evade responsibility and accountability for the casualties and damages of the gas leak.

To massive corporations like the Kampani (or the real one, Union Carbide), local lives are meaningless, and local environments, even more so. Through "the corrosive short-term greed and drive for profit" that is embodied in the Kampani, the fault-lines of capitalist economics are revealed (Mukherjee 229). Indeed, the Kampani is not alone in this devaluation and represents a much wider problem within capitalist culture. Therefore, much of recent scholarship in the environmental humanities has been devoted to explaining how capitalist power structures contribute to producing suffering. By creating a hierarchy in which most humans and non-humans are rendered disposable, multinational corporations such as the Kampani create a global system in which profit outweighs justice and human rights. According to Morton, capitalism's "vampirelike downward causality" creates not only a hierarchy of power, but also a hierarchy of suffering in which it is always "sucking away at the humans on the levels beneath" and draining away the stability of its own foundations (5). The problem with this parasitic relationship is best understood through Plumwood's critique of Western societies' artificial separation from non-human nature through the dualism of self

and other.[15] According to her theory, capitalist societies "hyper-separate [them]selves from nature and reduce it conceptually in order to justify domination" (4, 9).[16] This instrumentalist relationship to nature-as-other – its treatment as resource rather than an end in itself – allows for swift technological and industrial progress, but it also creates a culture of extreme separation where atrocities like Bhopal become not only possible but structurally likely to happen (9). As human and non-human others become disposable, capitalist societies become "unable to adapt ... to the earth and to the limits of other kinds of life" (15). In this way, exploitation of the other drives the Capitalocene and undermines Anthropocene survival, threatening to degrade the environment to the point where it is no longer able to support human life (Plumwood 8; Tsing et al. "Haunted Landscapes" G7; Moore "The Capitalocene" 598).

The hierarchical and dualistic power structures that Plumwood describe also exasperate life in dystopia because they determine whose lives are afforded moral consideration, and whose are considered disposable. Among other problems, this clearly affects how the Kampani deals with the survivors following the gas leak. The Kampani's lack of consideration for Global South victims is made painfully clear in one isolated interaction near the end of Sinha's novel. Amidst the chaos of a demonstration leading up to the final court case against the corporation, Animal overhears one old woman demand of a Kampani lawyer: "You were making poisons to kill insects, but you killed us instead. I would like to ask, was there ever much difference, to you?" (Sinha 306). Of course, she receives no reply, but the truth is clear; "the faceless poor of the third world" fall outside the sphere of moral consideration in the capitalist system (Nixon 47). In other words, there is a connection between the capitalist devaluation of human others and non-human nature, both of them suffering from exploitation in "histories of colonialism, racism, sexism, and class domination of many kinds" (Haraway "Otherworldly Conversations" 157-158). As others to the rational (male, Western) humanist subject, the people of Khaufpur inhabit the "fuzzy areas" between

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[15] The ecofeminist perspective is important for understanding Capitalocene culture, but unfortunately a more in-depth discussion of the relationship between gender and nature falls outside the scope of this thesis. However, I want to note that many critics, among them Alaimo and Hekman, pay close attention to this dimension of the self/other dualism in their text. As they put it, "the male/female dichotomy informs all the dichotomies that ground Western thought: culture/nature, mind/body, subject/object, rational/emotional, and countless others" (2).

[16] A more in-depth discussion of theories on dualistic categories would be too extensive, but it is important to note that Bruno Latour – who has written extensively on the subject/object division – too identifies this culture of hyper-separation as specifically Western. He refers to it as a "Great Divide" that separates humans from nature where in other cultures the two are seen as overlapping and interacting in complicated patterns and "hybrid networks" (11).

human victims considered worthy of ethical consideration and collateral damage which is not (Latour 100). Lacking both inherent worth, rights, and voice in the realm of capitalist economics, the poison victims are easily ignored by the Kampani, which first duty is to the economic interests of its owners. The presence of this culture of exploitation renders the inhabitants of dystopia virtually voiceless and complicates any efforts to seek redress. In addition, such silencing discredits the valuable experiences and knowledge of contemporary survivors of catastrophe.

The people of Khaufpur are trapped by global forces far more powerful than themselves. Because they find themselves effectively unable to speak out against the injustice of their situation, their present, as well as their past, is determined by "the interminable narrative of the poisoning" (Nixon 58). Khaufpur is a city that has experienced a disaster of apocalyptic proportions. This disaster is ongoing because it continues to haunt the landscape and population in the present. Ever since the gas leak, time seems to have stood still in Khaufpur, while the rest of the world has moved on. This is because the victims of the gas leak are unable to escape from the site of past catastrophe and are therefore made victim to the same global forces of violence and injustice repeatedly and endlessly. In his analysis, Nixon refers to this distorted temporality as "apocalyptic time," explaining that the victims of the poisoning are "bound in complex ways to past and future through the metamorphoses wrought by toxicity" (58). This is a perspective on time that is difficult to explain, but Animal makes an attempt when he gives a tour of the slums to an idealistic and somewhat naïve American doctor he befriends. "I don't need a watch because I know what time it is," he tells her. "Now o'clock, always now o'clock. In the Kingdom of the Poor, time doesn't exist" (Sinha 185). Elli, who is trying to set up a free clinic for the poison victims, is both fascinated and horrified by the unexpected resilience of the slums' inhabitants. She appears unable to understand that the survivors are only making the best of what remains to them in the present, insulting Animal with her pity at his living conditions. As Animal explains, "Hope dies in places like this, because hope lives in the future, and there's no future here, how can you think about tomorrow when all your strength is used up trying to get through today?" (185). When both present and future seem irrevocably determined by forces and objects beyond either comprehension or control, it becomes almost impossible for the poison victims to move on.

Two concepts from recent theories on the temporality of climate change can help us understand why the apocalypse of the gas leak has trapped Khaufpur in the past and created a dystopia the survivors are unable to escape from. Nixon and Morton, critics working with the

intersection between literature and environmental theory, have made efforts to formulate theories that explain the difficulties of representing climate change through narrative. First, in a study of climate change violence and environmental justice narratives, Nixon has coined the term "slow violence" to describe violence that "occurs gradually and out of sight ... dispersed across time and space" (2). He explains that representing "slow violence" is difficult because incremental and subtle events like global warming are a kind of violence too sustained and too imperceptible to be encompassed by traditional forms of narrative (3).[17] This "slow violence" renders places like Khaufpur or Bhopal "irretrievable to those who once inhabited them" (7), stretching out invisibly over decades and leaving its traces in the land and bodies of the population in a manifestation of the Wasteocene. What makes the situation even more complicated is that the gas leak constitutes what Morton calls a "hyperobject," a phenomenon whose "[distribution] in time and space relative to humans" is so vast that it transcends the human ability to comprehend or even observe it – much less narrate it (1).[18] Thus, it is possible to live in an era affected by environmental catastrophe and experience the Wasteocene in the individual human body, yet never truly "see" the crisis.

Through engagement with the "slow violence" wrought by "hyperobjects" in Khaufpur, Sinha illustrates how the representational issues enacted by their dispersion across time and space exacerbate the suffering endured by victims of environmental disaster across the globe. The rest of the world may have moved on and consigned the gas leak to the domain of the past. However, the people of Khaufpur's continued experience of the drawn-out effects of the poisons in their bodies proves that the apocalypse did not end, but rather begin, on the night of the disaster. The remaining poison from the gas leak did not vanish by itself – when no one came to remove it, it remained in the air, and worked its way into the land, the water,

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[17] Nixon also notes that these representational difficulties are exasperated by "slow violence"'s competition with the more visceral and dramatic immediacy of traditional forms of violence. Because violence is typically "immediate in time, explosive and spectacular in space … erupting into instant sensational visibility," global warming and other effects of climate change constantly have to compete against the spectacle of "falling bodies, burning towers, exploding heads, avalanches, volcanoes, and tsunamis" for the media's attention (2-3).

[18] The question of observing "hyperobjects" is interesting, but too complicated to get into in detail in the main text. Because humans are observing the object of global warming from the inside, it is impossible for us to distinguish between background and foreground, further complicating our perception of the Anthropocene. Using raindrops as an illustrative example, Morton explains how it is possible to "[experience] climate, in some sense," yet never "directly [experience] global warming as such" because global warming is not an item included on the "long list of catastrophic weather events" that characterise the Anthropocene, but rather the sum of all of these catastrophes across the planet, "viscous" and omnipresent (48). As he puts it, "Because they so massively outscale us, hyperobjects have magnified this weirdness of things for our inspection: things are themselves, but we can't point to them directly" (12).

and the bodies of the local people. This means that Khaufpur's inhabitants have to go on living in a poisonous landscape that, in addition to destroying their lungs and eyes, causes (in Animal's words) "fainting, fits, pain, blood's coughed up, can't see, hardly can breathe etc." (Sinha 112). Through this toxicity, the gas leak continues to claim new victims, long after the original casualties have been counted. Animal expresses this fact with his customary bitter accuracy when he tells the reader, "Wonderful poisons the Kampani made, so good it's impossible to get rid of them, after all these years they're still doing their work" (29). Thus, the representational difficulties of "slow violence" turn resistance against the Capitalocene into a struggle for visibility twice over; the victims have to contest not only their own invisibility, but also the invisibility of "the processes of exploitation and violence producing the Anthropocene" (Armiero and De Angelis 357-358).

Having now demonstrated that the people of Khaufpur already inhabit dystopia, and that Capitalocene forces of "slow violence" keep them trapped there (Nixon 2), I return to the role played by cli-fi novels in counteracting the silencing effects of Anthropocene narratives. Lost within the Anthropocene's universal human "we," the novel's poison victims have no voice and no chance at speaking out against injustice. Thus silenced, they end up losing their claim to compensation from the multinational corporation that represents the West's capitalist power. What makes matters worse is that the Kampani clearly considers the city's population unworthy of ethical consideration – necessary collateral damage in its pursuit of profit – in the same way that capitalist culture has disregarded the lives of human and non-human others since the beginning of the Capitalocene. In this way, through their simultaneous construction as voiceless victims and invisible survivors, the people embody what Mahlstedt calls "the double bind of the marginalized poor: they are both invisible and spectacle" (60). In the face of silencing dehumanisation and processes of violence so slow and massive that they become almost impossible to observe – let alone describe – storytelling functions as an important tool for reclaiming voice and agency.

When it comes to resisting not only the generalising effects of the Anthropocene, but also the silencing effects of the forces that make up the Capitalocene, Animal's role as narrator is crucial. Often, as Justin Omar Johnston points out, narratives of disaster run the risk of becoming "human interest stories" that ironically end up dehumanising their subjects by assigning them to a narrative that makes a spectacle out of their "tragic fragility and heroic survival" (130). The resulting humanitarian narrative is problematic because it appropriates

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the voices of survivors, dehumanises rather than humanises, and turns suffering into spectacle. While it makes visible the aftereffects of catastrophe, it renders the sufferers of dystopia invisible. In Mahlstedt's words, "This is the tragedy of toxic poisoning: it only becomes visible in human illness, deformity, and death" (65). Because of this, Animal and the other people of Khaufpur risk losing "their whole selves" and becoming reduced to representatives for Capitalocene and Wasteocene victimhood (67). Therefore, throughout the novel, Animal makes it clear that he detests this narrative and the objectification that accompanies it for rendering himself and his community as powerless victims. "I hated all that talk of "poison victims,"" he tells the reader, "I don't want to be pitied, I refuse to be some fucking bhonsdi-ka victim" (Sinha 27). Or, as he puts it later, in a self-written song he sings to Elli, the American doctor: *if you dare to pity me / i'll shit in your shoe and piss in your tea*" (172).[19] Through profanity and the strength of his voice, Animal prohibits the reader from turning him into a silently suffering victim. He makes a continuous effort to resist his audience's objectifying gaze and the narrative of victimisation through constant use of profanity and vulgar references.

The novel begins with Animal's refusal to tell his story to a visiting Australian "jarnalis," who is planning to write a book about the poison survivors of Khaufpur (3). If Animal's story were told by this outsider, it would have little chance of conveying Animal's experience as a survivor of the catastrophe. It is therefore significant that ultimately Animal is the narrator of his own story, and that he, as far as it is possible, endeavours to tell it on his own terms. As Animal puts it in a snide remark to the uncomprehending journalist, "many books have been written about this place, not one has changed anything for the better, how will yours be different?" (3). Instead, he steals the man's tape recorder and hides it away to tell his story later, at some unspecified point in the future following the events of the novel. The first-person, present tense story which weaves through digressions as Animal's mind wanders, thus gives an impression of narrative control that is constantly reinforced by Animal's oral and colloquial style of telling. In addition, Animal's particular use of language also functions as another method of control; through frequent use of local colloquialisms and a blending of what Pablo Mukherjee identifies as "a linguistic mixture of Hindi, English, French, Bhojpuri, and Urdu languages" (221), the novel often deliberately defies the comprehension of a Western readership. Clearly expecting disgust and confusion from his

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[19] The lower case "I" is true to Sinha's text.

readers in response to his narrative style, he asserts his control at the beginning of the novel. "If you want my story, you'll have to put up with how I tell it" (Sinha 2), he says, making sure that no ambiguity exists as to the ownership of the narrative.[20]

The result is a story less about Capitalocene violence than about individual survival through hardship. Animal focuses less on the trial against the Kampani or the struggles of life as a poison victim, and more on his own inner life and concerns as an individual who happens to inhabit a dystopian landscape. Mahlstedt identifies Animal's purpose in telling the story as an act of reclaiming his own and the city's identity. Animal, he writes, endeavours to "excavate the city's long history and to remember that even its post-disaster present cannot be reduced to the disaster" (67). The trial against the Kampani recedes into the background as Animal spends most of the novel focused on his own (lack of) relationship troubles. Fascinated by the American doctor, pining for his friend Nisha, and wondering if he is doomed to spend the rest of his life alone due to the injury of his back, Animal cares only for the ongoing conflict between his activist friends and the Kampani lawyers to the extent that he can use it to further his own romantic goals. These everyday concerns connected to, but to some degree separate from, the aftereffects of the catastrophe, have a humanising effect. They allow Animal to appear as a well-rounded character rather than just a stand-in for all the world's victims of colonial capitalism. The personal tone also helps maintain focus on life as lived alongside the horrors of the Anthropocene, without becoming lost in the incomprehensible vastness of "hyperobjects" or "slow violence" (Morton 1; Nixon 2). Thus, by refusing the narrative of the apocalypse to define the narrative of his life, Animal manages to "resist reductionisms" and to reclaim subject status as an individual affected by – but not defined by – the Capitalocene (Haraway "Promises of Monsters" 311).

As will become clear in chapter three, the act of reclaiming one's story is an act of resistance crucial for the project of Anthropocene survival. Because it is a story that originates in the "slow violence" of the Capitalocene and capitalist culture's devaluation of the other (Nixon 2), the Anthropocene requires narratives that exemplify survival and resistance.

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[20] This is not crucial for the point I am making, but it must be noted that, while Animal's story at first glance seems direct and unmediated, Sinha takes care to remind the reader that the narrative is actually transcribed, translated, and compiled into the novel's text by an unidentified intradiegetic editor. Therefore, although the fictional "Editor's Note" at the beginning of the novel insists that "nothing has been changed," this claim seems doubtful at best (n.p.). Animal, too, is conscious of this fact, addressing the reader directly to admit that he often forgets his "listeners" cannot hear him: "The things I say, by the time they reach you they'll have been changed out of Hindi, made into *Inglis et français pourquoi pas pareille quelques autres langues*? For you they're just words written on a page. Never can you hear my voice, nor can I ever know what pictures you see" (21). Nevertheless, although this complicates the question of narrative ownership, it does not undermine the power of a story of post-apocalyptic survival told from the inside.

Without such narratives, capitalist culture will be allowed to continue on its path of destruction – of itself and of others. Through Western societies' denialism of crises in the present, Ma Franci's predictions of the spreading apocalypse have the potential to be fulfilled. This idea of self-destructive apocalypse forms the basis for Butler's novel, which shows capitalist culture collapsing in on itself.

Parable of the Sower and the Culture of Denialism

Where *Animal's People* is a documentation of the "slow violence" that creates dystopia in the present, *Parable of the Sower* illustrates the self-destructive aspects of capitalism (Nixon 2). Unlike Sinha's novel, *Parable of the Sower* is set in the speculative future, and it shows not the devastation of a Global South slum but rather the destruction of the United States itself. By bringing the apocalypse to a Western society, it shows that capitalism's displacement of Anthropocene consequences onto non-Western societies is fundamentally unsustainable. Set in Los Angeles in the year 2024, *Parable of the Sower* depicts a future where anthropogenic climate change has led to environmental and societal collapse, extreme resource scarcity, social need, and increasing corporate control over the population. In the midst of this dystopia, the gated community of Robledo stands as a fragile bastion against the poverty, crime, and violence that rules the streets. The neighbourhood inside is safe for the time being, but it is also trapped and stagnant, unable to change or grow. It represents a radical privatisation of space that separates the people inside from those outside, those who have little from those who have nothing.[21] This setting functions as an analogy of capitalist societies in the present, whose refusal to learn and change in response to climate change threatens the future of the planet. While the world outside falls to pieces, Robledo keeps itself alive on the hope that the past will someday return to save it from the present, though it is only a matter of time before its walls are breached. After all, climate change is a "hyperobject" that transcends such borders (Morton 1). And as the novel demonstrates, survival cannot be based on segregation. Instead, it must be based on strategies of resistance like those that emerge from Lauren's first-person narrative of survival.

Parable of the Sower takes place in a future extrapolated from our present by projecting current trends in American culture into a vision of ecological disaster, economic ruin, and social upheaval. As it emerges in Butler's imagination of the year 2024, the United States has worn away the foundations for its existence through unchecked growth and expansion. Indeed, this future is a "harrowing world in which market exchanges and private property are the exclusive means of organizing social life" (Phillips 304). The unsustainable consumption and anthropogenic climate change associated with industrial capitalism has made drought and ecological disasters common and resources scarce. The least immediate

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[21] Interestingly, Butler's gated community emulates an institution traditionally used by white and upper-class elites to preserve their status and remove themselves from socioeconomic problems. By making her novel's walled neighbourhood a failure, Butler seems to say that people of colour cannot copy these same racist strategies of segregation.

threat to Robledo are the environmental crises that function almost as a background for the narrative. Early in the novel, Lauren records in her diary that "Tornadoes are smashing the hell out of Alabama, Kentucky, Tennessee, and two or three other states. Three hundred people dead so far. And there's a blizzard freezing the northern Midwest, killing even more people. In New York and New Jersey, a measles epidemic is killing people" (Butler 45). Like "hyperobjects" (Morton 1), these catastrophes are never directly experienced but always present in the background, looming threateningly in the distance as the unspoken cause and effect of the novel's societal problems. Both food, water, and shelter have become rare commodities that only the richest can afford. The same is true for the privatised hospitals, police force, fire brigades, and the schools. Meanwhile, extreme inequality has divided the population along racial and economic lines, and the small government has all but collapsed due to its failure to maintain control. In its place, corporations rule through violence and coercion, while vicious gangs and drugs rule the streets. The extreme devaluation of human life that follows has led to a resurgence of institutions like debt slavery as well as actual slavery. The result is a society based on a Hobbesian statue of nature, characterised by conflict, mistrust, and self-interest (Stillman 33; Phillips 304; Hobbes n.p.). Yet, as bad as things are, Lauren insists that "we haven't even hit bottom yet," that "[s]tarvation, disease, drug damage, and mob rule have only begun" (Butler 328). Things will only continue to get worse as long as no action is taken.

The question we must answer is how the United States of the novel could turn into such a post-apocalyptic nightmare. Using futuristic storytelling, Butler criticises the present by following the dystopian elements of current capitalist culture to their likely outcomes. Or, as Butler herself puts it, her novel focuses on "the things we have done wrong, that we appear to be doing wrong, and where those things can lead us ... the walled communities and the illiteracy and the global warming" (Potts and Butler 336). When Butler constructs her "critical dystopia," she is only showing her readers an exaggerated version of current social, economic, and environmental phenomena in the US (Miller 352). This means that, as in Sinha's novel, the apocalypse is a result of capitalist economic practices, distributions of violence, and concentrations of power. Indeed, capitalist societies' short-sighted pursuit of profit, disregard for human life, and separation from non-human nature make them structurally unsustainable and unable to adapt to the changing environment (Latour 9; Plumwood 1; Whyte "Indigenous Climate Change Studies" 2; Moore "The Capitalocene" 598; Haraway "Anthropocene" 160). As Miller puts it, because "capitalism and unquestioned growth" are valued above

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environments and human lives, "we" are headed toward "a dystopian future from which, if we let it happen, we may never recover" (353). By giving the present this dystopian treatment, *Parable of the Sower* demonstrates that speculative fiction plays an important role in identifying the "cultural roots of environmental crises" (Heise 2). At the same time, Butler demonstrates that Western societies' unsustainable way of inhabiting the planet must change in order to secure a liveable future in the Anthropocene.

In this "dystopia achieved" (Phillips 304) there is little room to hope for a better future. Outside the compounds live only those who have lost everything and are willing to do anything to survive: thieves, murderers, roving gangs, and cannibalistic children. The relative safety of privatised spaces such as Robledo is preferable, but only for a limited time. According to Stillman, such gated communities are "born of dreams of stability, security, property, and family," but instead of saving their inhabitants, "they end up as small dystopias ... increasingly endangered by the outside world, blocks of fear and defensiveness in an inimical and threatening world" (19). Indeed, in the overpopulated community, there are no jobs, no prospects, and very limited resources. The only options open to young people are a life of poverty and unemployment inside or one of crime and gang violence outside. This demonstrates that, for people in dystopia, "possibilities for a better way of life are constricted, and [the] alternatives ... are grim, doomed, or self-destructive" (15).[22] The neighbourhood's adults endure by maintaining a hope that the crisis is temporary, and that it is only a matter of time before the government regains control and returns society to the way it was (Phillips 303). They are the generation that once experienced stability and now "never miss a chance to relive the good old days or to tell kids how great it's going to be when the country gets back on its feet and good times come back" — once "the glory, wealth, and order of the twentieth century" has been restored (Butler 5, 16). To them, the current condition of their society seems like nothing more than a temporary setback.

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[22] The novel presents only one option for a life in relative safety outside the gated communities. Debt slavery eventually develops as a result of rampant corporatism, a weak government, and a population made desperate by crisis. One example of this is the coastal town of Olivar, which Lauren and her family hear about on the radio early in the novel before their own neighbourhood collapses. When it becomes clear that the town "can't protect itself from the encroaching sea, the crumbling earth, the crumbling economy, or the desperate refugees," Olivar (and its solar powered desalination plant) is bought by, and "receives special help" from, a corporation called the KSF company (Butler 103). Slowly but steadily, the inhabitants are transformed from educated middle-class employees into debt slaves working for room and board (105). As Robledo's destitution increases, even towns like Olivar begin to look attractive to Lauren's family. Thus, as Peter Stillman points out, human and non-human life is equally converted into capital as "the private power of the rich and of corporations" increasingly takes over for the government (17).

However, climate crisis is not temporary, and the apocalypse signals an undeniable need for change. Among the members of the community, only Lauren is able to see that the old world is being kept alive artificially and temporarily inside the community's walls. Unlike the others, she has accepted that the stable and affluent world her parents grew up in is unlikely to return and she is frustrated by her friends' and family's unwillingness to confront reality. She knows that the future will be demanding, and she "sees that her neighbourhood, city, and country are in the midst of a long-term, irreversible transformation" (Stillman 25). However, her father has forbidden her to spread panic to the others in the community by talking about the conditions beyond the walls, and he refuses to listen when she suggests preparing the neighbourhood for crisis. Following a stern lecture from him, she thinks sadly to herself that "*your* world is coming to an end, and maybe you with it" (Butler 53). Lauren is certain that a great and violent change is on its way, and her father's reassurances cannot convince her to wait passively like the others.

The scene that best illustrates the difficulty Lauren encounters in preparing her community for collapse takes place when she instead hesitatingly tries to share her fears with one of her friends, Joanne. Over lunch in her bedroom, Lauren tries to convince her to prepare for "a life afterward" (46), that is after Robledo is destroyed and they are all forced to survive on the streets. However, Lauren soon realises that Joanne prefers the "superficial comfort" of denial to the harsh truths of reality (46). While Lauren studies edible plants and prepares emergency packs, Joanne waits passively for the stability and safety of early capitalist society to return on their own. However, despite her insistence that life will get better, what she really believes is that there is no point in preparing for survival because "[w]e can't make the climate change back, no matter why it changed in the first place ... We can't do anything" (48). Faced with the massive emergencies of the Anthropocene, the people of Robledo feel completely powerless. They believe that "the game is over, it's too late, there's no sense trying to make anything any better, or at least no sense having any active trust in each other in

working and playing for a resurgent world" (Haraway "Introduction" 3). After all, if their world has already ended, then there is no point in making an effort to change or to save it.[23]

Whether the world is ending or only a certain way of inhabiting it, the walls of Robledo will not survive the coming of the apocalypse. In fact, what the "massive, looming presence" of the neighbourhood wall really represents is an unsustainable denial of climate change that impairs the community's ability to survive through environmental devastation (5). Identified by a young Lauren as a "crouching animal ... more threatening than protective" (5), it is a symbol not only of safety, but also of segregation. By separating those inside from the crisis outside, it provides a false sense of security and prevents engagement with, and preparation for, reality. The resulting illusion of self-sufficiency perpetuates the belief that the compounds and the outside world are separate and divides the population. As Jerry Phillips puts it, "Privatopia, the walled or gated community, is, at bottom, a fantasy of escape, that one can be in the world without having to live through the sharp contradictions that the world presents" (302). While the wall stands, it allows the community to remain blind to the present and to place an undue amount of trust in an already collapsing political and economic system. If Robledo really was cut off from the rest of the world, the eventual destruction of society outside would have no bearing on the community. However, Robledo exists within and not apart from climate change, and no walls can protect the neighbourhood from this fact. The neighbourhood's borders are fragile and artificial, and sooner or later the walls will have to come down.

In the end, it is Robledo's comparative wealth that eventually attracts the anger and envy of thieves and raiders from outside. As Lauren puts it later in the novel, "everything was getting worse ... I didn't believe we would be allowed to sit behind our walls, looking clean and fat and rich to the hungry, thirsty, homeless, jobless, filthy people outside" (Butler 165). Although Lauren has been expecting it since she was a little girl, the collapse of the neighbourhood happens gradually. Resources inside grow scarcer and scarcer while the poor

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[23] Heise and Haraway have both made efforts to explain the prevalence of denialism as a response to climate change and other Anthropocene events. Heise, for one, claims that the Anthropocene era has a tendency to impair action because it effectively inspires a simultaneous impression of human power and powerlessness. On the one hand, an era named for "large-scale transformation of planetary ecosystems" gives the impression that humans control and possess the ability to shape the world and its future (3-4). However, on the other hand, the largely unintended and irreversible consequences of the era's transformations, along with continued failures to reverse or even deaccelerate them, can also inspire the sort of defeatism that inhibits action. Similarly, Haraway argues that one of the most common responses "to the horrors of the Anthropocene" is denial of its very existence ("Introduction" 4). Because climate change is so vast and threatening, people simply find themselves unable to confront it.

outside grow more and more desperate. At first, thieves and armed robbers brave the neighbourhood watch to sneak in at night and take what they can of food and supplies. Then, after a long period of slowly "unravelling, disintegrating, bit by bit," the community is decimated in a "big crash" of sudden chaos and destruction, when a band of pyromaniac raiders torch the neighbourhood (107-108, 135). These "pyro addicts," abusers of a new drug that makes people want to set fires, are ruthless as they decimate Robledo and murder its inhabitants (153). They are the most desperate of the street poor, a gang of teenagers dedicated to end segregation by destroying the "supposed wealth and privilege" of the compounds (50). This gang is less interested in stealing supplies than in decimating the neighbourhood and killing the "rich" people inside (110). In Lauren's words, they "shot us and shot us and shot us," the narration entering a frantic state of repetition as she witnesses – and experiences through her hyperempathy – the brutal deaths of her family, friends, and neighbours (135). It is only because she prepared for the worst that she makes it out as one of the few survivors. Her prediction of the raid and her emergency escape pack leave her equipped to undertake a journey north in search of a place to establish a new community based on the values of Earthseed, a belief system that values interdependency and adaptation.

The collapse of Robledo demonstrates a very simple but crucial fact, which is that man-made borders cannot stop ecological crisis. However, capitalist societies in the present still act much like Robledo, refusing to acknowledge or adapt to the changing world around them. This way, the gated compound of Butler's novel acts almost as a microcosm of the Western world when faced with the apocalypses of others elsewhere. It may not be entirely fair to compare the small community of scared and desperate families to an economic system that has produced catastrophe across the world. After all, Robledo is not the cause of the crisis, and its population and the people outside the walls are all victim to the Capitalocene. However, when it comes to denialism, there are similarities in how Robledo and Western societies both act as segregated societies that refuse to handle crisis outside their borders. In the novel, a wall separates Robledo from the crisis outside. In the real world, national borders (as well as borders of race and ethnicity) allow the Western world to retain the privilege of situating the apocalypse – whether preventable or not – as a distant or future event. After all, denial of the undeniable effects of the Capitalocene is made possible by the continuous displacement of ecological consequences elsewhere. As Latour puts it, capitalist societies in the West have survived so far in the Anthropocene by depending on a system that works "by destroying the rest of the world and reducing its peoples to abject poverty" (9) – by extracting

resources from the Global South and returning waste and pollution. This is the case in *Animal's People* (and in the actual case with Union Carbide and Bhopal), where the location of the Kampani's factory in a Global South slum allows the corporation to save money on safety measures while endangering only the expendable lives and land of the local population. While ethically indefensible to most, this is a common and incredibly efficient way to generate profit and growth in Western societies while sacrificing the periphery in the Global South (Plumwood 21).

The Anthropocene is frightening to us in the West precisely because it forces us to contemplate the loss of the beneficial hierarchy that allows us to grow and thrive at the expense of less powerful human and non-human others. Indeed, the apocalypse as we imagine it threatens to put an end not only to this one-sided exploitation and to our illusions of "self-sovereignty," but to "a kind of culture that has exceeded its ecological carrying capacity" (LeMenager 231). In other words, both Robledo and the West are unable to accept that not the world itself but the world as they know it is coming to an end; they find themselves unable to face the question: "*whose* civilization must be let go?" (231). In Western discourses about the apocalypse, LeMenager argues, there is always an implicit "we" that represents the members of European and American societies that have not yet experienced world-ending events (231). This "we" is ill prepared to face a future of ecological devastation because it has yet to learn effective strategies for survival. Meanwhile, those who already inhabit their "ancestors' dystopia" (Whyte 208) – most indigenous peoples, and the people of Khaufpur and Bhopal, to name a few – have already "learned to die" from decades and centuries of living with climate change (LeMenager 229). For them, the current climate crisis represents only change – a major and demanding change, to be sure, but not insurmountable. Thus, in both Robledo and in the present, the coming apocalypse represents the end not of the world but of a certain kind of comfortable and comforting life.

The challenge presented by such widespread denialism is to find a way to make the violence of global warming apparent – to bring the everyday consequences of the Anthropocene's changes to life. This task is complicated by the Anthropocene narrative's natural tendency toward generalisations. As Armiero and De Angelis point out, "The Anthropocene is a grand narrative because it proposes universal truths, or laws, and considers universal agents, working rather poorly with the nuisances of the specific" (346). Indeed, in their words, the universal human "we" has "never ... been more powerful in a historical narrative than now" (346). In this "grand narrative" (346), nuances like who creates climate

change and who suffers from it disappear. Along with those important distinctions, individual knowledge and experiences vanish because the Anthropocene "we" leaves no room for them. With them vanishes any possibility we have of learning to live with and through climate change, because such strategies emerge from lived experience. This means that the fear and denial that characterise present responses to crisis need to be overcome in order to avoid catastrophe and ensure the future liveability of the planet. The problem we face is how to tell relatable and comprehensible stories in an era defined by massive "hyperobjects" that exist beyond our comprehension (Morton 1). In other words, we as a society need to find a way to narrate an era dominated by cataclysmic events such as global warming, pollution, rising sea levels, and species loss.

  As Sinha's novel demonstrates, self-narration is key to reclaiming narrative agency. By telling his story on his own terms, Animal is able to recover his status as an individual survivor of ecological disaster. Thus, one solution to the Anthropocene's silencing generalisations lies in the personal and immediate storytelling offered by cli-fi novels. According to LeMenager, the key to narrating the climate crisis is to find "patterns of expectation and narrative form with which to combat this unsettling era of climate shift and social injury" (220). In other words, it is not enough to tell stories about the destruction wrought by environmental catastrophe without also telling stories of those who live through such events and survive. The goal should be to find ways of inhabiting an era of climate change without losing track of the individual human experiences that make up the "everyday Anthropocene" (223). The present therefore needs a genre that can closely and intimately narrate individual human experiences without getting lost in the hopelessness and immensity of apocalyptic storytelling. In this era dominated by fear of the future, the novel might therefore be uniquely suited to counteract generalisation, by representing both a "granular and personal account of near catastrophic change" as well as "what it means to live through climate shift, moment by moment, in individual fragile bodies" (225). Especially through cli-fi novels, capitalist societies' necessary task of "learning to die" by accepting life with and through crisis, "assumes particularity ... that invites readers' empathy, theory of mind, and, to some extent, identification" (229). In texts like Butler's and Sinha's, this empathy and understanding is achieved through the strength of the protagonists' voices.

  In other words, the first-person narrative of *Parable of the Sower* is uniquely suited to translate the incomprehensible largeness of the Anthropocene with all of its crises into relatable human stories. The novel is structured around a series of dated entries written by

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Lauren at different stages of her life in Robledo and throughout her subsequent travels. These entries are interspersed with Lauren's own poetry, the verses about God and change that eventually form the basis for her creation of Earthseed, a religion focused on adaptation, solidarity, and survival. It is significant that the journal format lets Lauren tell her own story, much like Animal's audio tapes let him reclaim narrative control and agency. Lauren's role as narrator of her own story is especially significant because she is not the typical narrator of dystopian fiction. That the story is told by a black teenaged girl leading a community of survivors by the strength of her voice may not be as remarkable today as it was twenty years ago when the novel was first published, but it is still worth noting.[24] Another similarity to Animal's story is that Lauren's diary functions as a text that makes ecological devastation available to human experience and encourages a full engagement with the crisis. It shifts the narrative focus from the immensity of the climate crisis and societal collapse to Lauren's personal journey of coming of age, religious awakening, and community formation. The strong "I" that Lauren represents thus resists the silence and invisibility of the Anthropocene's pervasive and problematic "we" (Armiero and De Angelis 346).

The Anthropocene narrative of apocalypse is a problematic way of interpreting environmental changes. First, by situating crisis in the future, it obscures the geographical and temporal nuances of catastrophe. Second, because the future it speaks of concerns a universal human "we," it fails to acknowledge the capitalist origins of climate change. The result is that the apocalypses of the past and present become erased from the narrative and that the survivors of those catastrophes are rendered invisible and thus voiceless. When it comes to counteracting the Anthropocene's generalising and silencing effects, stories are crucial. Both Butler and Sinha's novels challenge the Western apocalyptic narrative by showing that not all humans are equally implicated in, or affected by, ecological devastation. Through first-person storytelling, Animal and Lauren both confront the powers that produce dystopia, albeit in different ways. Animal's acerbic audio recordings give voice to the survivors of the crisis and resist the narrative of silent victimisation that has been imposed on them. Meanwhile, Lauren's diary encourages readers to look beyond the all-encompassing and defeatist narrative of the Anthropocene to the resilience of individuals. These two vastly different novels and

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[24] Butler's novels have a decades-long history of pioneering revolutionary black female point-of-view characters within science fiction. As Claire Curtis points out, her novels have a tendency to follow "an ordinary woman facing impossible conditions, someone who must make unattractive choices in order to find a place and a way to live" (414). Lauren might be an ordinary woman, but her ideas are extraordinary. Through her teaching, preaching, and writing she goes on in the second novel to start a revolution based on her self-made religion.

narrators come together to call for a change in the way capitalist societies treat human and non-human others across the planet. The key, Whyte argues, to enacting such change is "not give up by dwelling in a nostalgic past" and to keep in mind that dystopia is "just a brief, yet highly disruptive, historical moment for us – at least so far" ("Our Ancestors' Dystopia" 208). After all, places like Khaufpur may be currently trapped in the ongoing violence of an increasingly distant past, but as a voice assures Animal in one of his dreams, "even eternity does not last forever" (Sinha 237). An end to dystopia is possible, as long as Western societies let go of their avarice, denialism, and displacement of consequences.

As Lauren leaves behind the smouldering ruins of her neighbourhood, she demonstrates that other worlds are possible, though they might necessitate the ending of previous ways of life. In Phillips' words, Butler's novel shows that "the future in toto is not yet with us and might still be avoided if we take the requisite actions" (300). What is therefore needed in the Anthropocene instead of the present culture of denial, defeat, and displacement of responsibility, is a culture of survival – one that can teach "the arts of living on a damaged planet" (Tsing, et al.). There is little doubt that for as long as capitalist cultures continue to imagine humans as separate from the rest of nature, the process of environmental decline will continue, wearing away at the future liveability of the planet. Constructive engagement with environmental crises cannot be based upon narratives that encourage capitulation. Instead, narratives are needed that encourage thinking through climate change "without the irresponsible and self-indulgent excitement attached to narratives of apocalypse" (LeMenager 225). The necessary challenging and changing of capitalism's disastrous relationship to the other is the theme of chapter three. Here, Animal and Lauren's more-than-human abilities aid them in connecting closely with others and in building alternatives to capitalist culture that might yet produce a sustainable path forward. In the words of Bruno Latour, "the West thinks it is the sole possessor of the clever trick that will allow it to keep on winning indefinitely, whereas it has perhaps already lost everything" (Latour 9). The question, then, is what Western societies can learn by listening to stories of survival.

Chapter 3: Life in the Ruins

"Crucial to finding the way is this: there is no beginning or end. / You must make your own map" (Harjo 132). In her poem "A Map to the Next World," Joy Harjo explores the possibility for humans to move forward from a world that has been made desolate by their mistakes.[25] Climbing through a hole in the sky, they now follow an imperfect map to the next world, where a new chance at life awaits. In the Anthropocene, exploitative capitalist ways of inhabiting the earth generate violent dystopias and catastrophic apocalypses that threaten the future liveability of the planet. It is therefore not enough to "fix" this existing system; if humans are to survive in an era of climate change, efforts must also be made to "defend or build alternatives" to capitalist ways of inhabiting the earth (Armiero and De Angelis 347). What Harjo's poem highlights is the need for a guide to a sustainable way forward in the Anthropocene – a way to learn the "arts of living on a damaged planet" (Tsing et al.) This map has to be a story, because unlike other means of communication, stories – especially poems – give perspective on, and make available for understanding, otherwise inaccessible experiences.

Butler and Sinha's cli-fi novels are not poetry but they also function as maps forward because they are stories that focus on resistance and survival, interdependency and community, hope and rebuilding, after catastrophe. Together, they complicate the Western declensionist narrative of apocalypse, which is produced through capitalist exploitations of the other and a continuous denial of responsibility. At the same time, they demonstrate that the Anthropocene signals not so much "an end" as "a profound change" (LeMenager 227) – that there is hope, even beyond the apocalypse. This chapter therefore argues that narratives of post-apocalyptic survival demonstrate how to "stay with the trouble" of inhabiting a precarious present alongside many kinds of human and non-human others by creating communities of interdependency (Haraway "Introduction" 1). Through the formation of these communities, they show that resistance against the structures that drive the Capitalocene is possible through forces that "orient themselves ... to heal, to value outside the criteria of capital, to struggle to stay within ecological limits, to create new ways to socially cooperate

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[25] Joy Harjo is a poet, musician, and author of the Muscogee Nation. Her work emphasises the lost connections between humanity and non-human nature and strives to reconnect the two through a critical engagement with modern ways of life. Along with other Native American poets such as Linda Hogan, she demonstrates the importance of listening to voices outside the dominant modes of storytelling in Western literary tradition. Tsing et al. emphasise the value of taking into account indigenous perspectives when it comes to living with climate change, as they represent a good point of departure for thinking about human relationships to nature outside Western capitalist culture ("Bodies" M7).

within those limits, to establish resilient livelihoods providing commons that are also ecologically sustainable" (Armiero and De Angelis 346).

Key to such acts of resilience in dystopia is both novels' protagonists' erasure of the self/other divide, which makes them capable of "over[throwing]" the capitalist origins of the Anthropocene (346). In *Animal's People*, the toxic bodies and cyborg-like identities of Animal and the other survivors – products of the Wasteocene – resist their capitalist and colonialist origins by forming a community that continues to struggle for justice following the catastrophe. Animal, in particular – with his non-human identity and ability to read minds – represents the possibility of overcoming the separation between humans and nature. This theme is reinforced in *Parable of the Sower*, where Lauren's "hyperempathy syndrome" makes possible the creation of a community based on values of caring for the other. Here, Earthseed becomes "a new ethics of Being" built on the principle that "we shape change and change shapes us" (Phillips 302). Together, the two novels provide a guide to the confusing entanglements of the Chthulucene era.

Cyborg Bodies in *Animal's People*

In Khaufpur, the poison in the land and water, as well as the fight against the Kampani for justice and redress, has taken over the lives (and bodies) of the local population, trapping them in a cycle of "slow violence" (Nixon 2). Taking place in this present dystopia, *Animal's People* shows that the apocalypse – or the Anthropocene – does not mean that the world is coming to an end, only that the means of life and survival in it are changing. In the words of Animal's friend Zafar, repeating an old Indian proverb, "*Jahaañ jaan, jahaan hai*. While we have life, we have the world" (Sinha 284). Unlike Western declensionist narratives of apocalypse, Sinha's novel shows that life goes on beyond the apocalypse, with or without redress, with or without any hope for a better future. Thus, despite their invisibility in the hierarchy of the capitalist system the "people of the Apokalis" continue to struggle for survival and redress at the site of the catastrophe (63). Sinha's novel is important, not only because it reveals the apocalypses of the present, but because it "contains ... clues about how to confront, survive, and change" our present world and the dystopian elements of our culture (Mukherjee 217). Therefore, this section argues that Animal's story, seen as a narrative of resistance, carries the potential to unite survivors of Capitalocene violence into communities capable of post-apocalyptic survival.

This narrative of resistance and resilience against the systems of the Capitalocene emerges through Animal's refusal of human identity as well as his ability to read minds. These qualities grant him the ability to overcome the self/other and human/nature binaries that Plumwood describes as problematic in Western cultures. In Nixon's words, they make him a nexus in the "occluded, sprawling webs of interconnectedness" that tie together self and other in direct contradiction of the capitalist culture of separation (45). This makes Sinha's novel an example of what Haraway calls "[c]yborg writing," a genre that opens up discussions of human relationships to the other by challenging the separation of the self ("A Cyborg Manifesto" 311). The cyborg is an ambiguous figure. Neither fully human, nor animal, nor machine, it brings together elements and attributes of all three, thus blurring the line between the categories and putting into question what it means to be human. Therefore, Haraway uses it as a metaphor to explore the possibility of moving beyond the rigid essentialist identities dictated by gender, race, and class that mark certain groups of humans as other. In her words, cyborg figures are the "illegitimate offspring of militarism and patriarchal capitalism, not to mention state socialism" (293) – they are, in other words, products of the very forces that

make up the Capitalocene. However, cyborg figures are revolutionaries that are "exceedingly unfaithful to their origins" (293), and they play a crucial role in dismantling the systems that made them. Because cyborgs can expect no rescue or assistance from their uncompassionate creators, they instead become a force for social change in their efforts to survive (293). Cyborg writing, then, is fundamentally about the power of survival, change, and resistance against dehumanising violence.

Therefore, Animal underestimates the power of his voice when he wonders aloud to his readers, "I am a small person not even human, what difference will my story make?" (Sinha 3). It is precisely the stories of such "small persons," especially those who are not considered fully "human," that carry the potential to "mark the world that marked them as other" (Haraway "A Cyborg Manifesto" 311). Like Haraway's cyborg, a being whose fluid identity resists dichotomous boundaries, Animal is a being at the edges of categories. He represents a challenge to capitalist cultures' dualistic way of viewing and interacting with the world. Animal exists in his bitter and lonely state as a result of a disability that was inflicted upon him by the Kampani's failure to take responsibility for the apocalyptic accident at their factory. He was only six years old when the poisons, dormant either in his body or in the city's water and air since the night of the catastrophe, began to violently change his body. One day, he explains, "The pain gripped my neck and forced it down. I had to stare at my feet while a devil rode my back and chafed me with red hot tongs" (Sinha 15). In this passage, the poison's effects on his body possess a tangible violent force representative of the Wasteocene violence that visited the slums during and following the accident. The forward twist of Animal's spine and his four-footed gait act as physical signifiers of the Wasteocene and mark him as outwardly other in the eyes of the Kampani (Nixon 52).

Thus, marked as different, Animal's very existence represents a challenge to the definition of humanity put forward by the capitalist and colonialist forces that made him. Speaking into the stolen tape recorder, he begins his story with the lines, "I used to be human once. So I'm told. I don't remember it myself, but people who knew me then say I walked on two feet just like a human being" (Sinha 1). As Mukherjee points out, this opening line is significant because it exposes the Capitalocene logic that dehumanises its victims in order to silence them (230). Within this logic, it is "only the powerful and the privileged" that have any claim to concepts like "rights and justice" (230), or even to identification as human. Nixon, too, has aptly identified Animal's non-human body as key to exploring the "border

zones" that lie between the boundaries of human and animal identities, different economic groups, and the "dehumanizing chasm that divides those who can act with impunity and those who have no choice but to inhabit intimately, over the long term, the physical and environmental fallout of actions undertaken by distant, shadowy economic overlords" (52-53). What this ultimately means is that Animal's insistence that he is actually not human but rather an animal has the potential to challenge the very definition of humanity that the Anthropocene relies upon. As a cyborg, Animal plays a part in exposing the Western capitalist concept of humanity as a bounded category that includes and excludes individuals and groups from ethical consideration based on race, ethnicity, and ability.

It is this cyborg identity that enables him to become a potential revolutionary, thus making it crucial to understand the Wasteocene origins of his body. Armiero and De Angelis' narrative of capitalist and industrial contamination explains how the toxic fallout of the disastrous gas leak could change Animal's body to a point where he – and others – no longer recognises it as human. Read through the Wasteocene, Khaufpur's slums become a site from which emerges toxic connections that transcend the boundary between local and global, self and other. Stacy Alaimo has argued that these connections of toxicity produce "toxic bodies," whose "exceedingly leaky" borders tie them into vast and varied networks with others (262). These networks produce a kind of "trans-corporeality," in which individuals are never only themselves but rather "intermeshed with the more-than-human world" in ways that are not always clearly apparent (238).[26] Because they inhabit their city intimately alongside this toxicity, the survivors themselves are aware of the way the poisons have permeated everything. Sinha illustrates this through an encounter during the tour Animal gives his doctor friend of the slums. Here, they come across a young woman who refuses to breastfeed her new-born because she believes her milk is poison. "Our wells are full of poison," she explains when Elli demands to know why, "It's in the soil, water, in our blood, it's in our milk. Everything here is poisoned. If you stay here long enough, you will be too" (Sinha 108). What this means is that, through the "ongoing diffusion of chemicals into living bodies," a network

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[26] The topic is too vast to get into here, but I want to note that Alaimo's concept of transcorporeality is reflected in many recent feminist theories about monsters – frequent inhabitants of sci-fi narratives, that, much like toxic bodies, describe the intricate connections and leaky borders between human and non-human beings. Several critics, among them Alaimo herself, Tsing et al., Haraway, and Margrit Schildrick, have used the term monster to refer to creatures that confound categorical boundaries such as self and other. Schildrick, in particular, has argued that monsters become a site to which what lies "outside the bounds of the proper" can be safely located (2). After all, humanity as a bounded category "can be maintained only on the basis of a series of exclusions" and has been created through the location of difference in others – "in black people, in foreigners, in animals, the lower classes, and in women," as well as of course in nature (5, 2).

of toxicity is created that reaches far beyond Khaufpur (Johnston 120). As the poisons connect the bodies of Khaufpur's population to a greater network of toxicity that includes both landscapes and human and non-human bodies, the illusion of humans' independency from the other begins to crack.

This breakdown of the separation between humans and non-human others is essential because it has bearing on the people of Khaufpur's opportunities for resistance against the Capitalocene forces represented by the Kampani. In the years following the catastrophe, it is not just Animal's outwardly othered body that has been dehumanised and robbed of subject status. The title of Sinha's novel is a reference to the effectively non-human – animal – status that has been assigned to the survivors of the gas leak through repeated refusals of justice and redress (Murphy 160).[27] This dehumanisation is a result of a narrow definition of universal humanity that relies on the exclusion from the sphere of ethics of anyone unable to conform to "certain historical and cultural ways of being human" (Heise 5).[28] Combined with an anthropocentric view of ethics, this narrow definition of what it means to be human robs victims of Capitalocene violence of their voices and thus their ability to enact resistance. Mukherjee highlights the problem with this silencing when he writes that Animal's non-human identity reveals the "scandal that lurks behind the tragedy of Bhopal" (221) – that the inhabitants of present dystopias are unable to recover in the aftermath of catastrophe because their status as victims effectively excludes them from humanity. When Animal and his friends take up the fight for justice against the Kampani, what they are contesting is not only their right to redress as poison victims, but their right to rebuild their lives as humans. In pursuit of resistance following catastrophe, an important part of the toolkit is therefore the ability to set aside the boundaries that separate self from other.

Against this separation, Animal's cyborg identity is crucial. Thus, it is not only his act of storytelling that becomes a tool for resistance against capitalist violence, but the very

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[27] Although the topic lies outside the scope of this thesis, the construction of animals as others in Western culture is well-documented. Haraway puts it like this: "Animals are not part of the social relationship at all; they never have any status but that of not-human; not subject, therefore object" ("Otherworldly Conversations" 175).

[28] The problem of the survivors' non-human status in their fight for redress and survival is made clear both in the novel and in secondary criticism. In his encounter with the Australian journalist, Animal accuses the man of not recognising the people of Khaufpur's humanity when telling (and selling) their stories: "For his sort we're not really people. We don't have names" (Sinha 9). A few pages earlier, he points out that words like "*rights, law, justice*" have different meanings in Western societies and in the Global South; "On that night it was poison, now it's words that are choking us" (3). In Khaufpur, the very language of human rights has become a different kind of poison, capable of silencing and oppressing the ones it should have been designed to protect. At best, Animal – with his twisted back – and his community – with their bleeding lungs and ruined eyes – are a spectacle for international consumption. To affirm this, Johnston writes that in a world where human rights determine the application of justice, "the question of who counts as a human person becomes the key determination" (129).

existence of his body as well. It is a well-documented fact within disabilities studies that the possibility of the broken body has the potential to threaten, disrupt, and break down "[t]he boundaries of the transcendent subject" (Schildrick 3). This is because the disabled body works as a signifier of otherness not only through its apparent difference, but through its emphasis on the embodied existence of the human (3). Once the boundary between mind and body begins to fray, the separation between nature and human that informs it is unsettled as well. Unlike the transcendent humanist subject, Animal demonstrates a form of humanity that is tied very much to the material and to the natural world around him. Walking around on all fours puts him in close contact with the ground and gives him a unique perspective. "The world of humans is meant to be viewed from eye level," he states on the first tape, making no attempt to hide his bitterness (Sinha 2). Meanwhile, his back forces him to experience a "[w]hole nother world" from his lowered perspective "below the waist" (2). This makes him able to "smell pissy gussets and shitty backsides whose faint stenches don't carry to your nose" (2). Thus, he sees beneath the façade of civilization and society and becomes more closely connected to the city and its slums. This way, disabled bodies in cli-fi have the potential to prove that "allegedly maladaptive characteristics" can in fact "[reformulate] evolutionary "weakness" or "lack" of adaptive benefits as new capacities" and become "the key to the creation of new alliances" (Fiskio 18).

One such "maladaptive characteristic" is the magical realism device of Animal's ability to read minds. Ostensibly another effect of the poisons on his body, Animal is able to hear the thoughts of both human and non-human others, as well as the voices of seemingly inanimate objects. "They started when I was small," he explains, "after I had the fever that bent my back" (Sinha 55). Ever since then, he has been able to "hear people's thoughts even when their lips were shut," as well as "en passant comments from all types of things, animals, birds, trees, rocks giving the time of day" (8). Sinha explicitly ties this ability to Animal's bent back, thus identifying it as a Wasteocene product, in a conversation Animal has with his friend Zafar. Disapproving of Animal's insistence on non-human identification, Zafar claims that Animal is in fact not "disabled" but rather "especially abled" (23). He says, "It means okay you don't walk on two legs like most people, but you have skills and talents that they don't" (23). Animal, possibly misunderstanding him, at once connects the idea of "especial abledness" to the voices in his head, redefining them from mental illness to mental acuity, a skill that allows him to communicate beyond normal human capabilities. According to

Mukherjee, it is Animal's mind-reading that makes him uniquely suited to mediate and translate between communities in times of change (227). This is because the ability to connect closely to others makes it possible for him to experience the city as "a network composed of related subjects, including himself" (226). Echoing Alaimo's idea of transcorporeality, he uses the term "transpersonality" to refer to the connections that take shape as a direct result of the "toxic degradation of a postcolonial environment" (228).[29]

By granting Animal this "transpersonality," the poisons create opportunities for connections that go beyond the limits of the bounded individual self. The scene that best illustrates his enhanced ability to relate to others takes place during a visit to a doctor's office early in the novel. The old nun Ma Franci is trying to seek medical help on Animal's behalf because she is worried about his frequent conversations with inaudible voices. However, while he is translating back and forth between Ma and the doctor, Animal notices that he is being watched by "[a]n ugly little monster" (Sinha 57), a deformed foetus on display in a jar. The Khã-in-the-Jar[30] – as Animal ends up calling it – is a monstrous product of the Capitalocene that represents those who either died or were never even born to begin with on the night of the catastrophe. As the two bond over their shared suffering throughout the novel, Animal learns that the Khã considers itself a member of something it calls "the Board of Directors of the posionwallah shares" (237). This board is a collaboration of poison victims that work "[t]o undo everything the Kampani does" and to "heal the hurts done by those poisons, to remove them from the earth and water and air" (237). The toxic "transpersonality" (Alaimo 228) created by the gas leak has thus tied together its victims – both the living and the dead – in a community that works to subvert the violence done to it by the Kampani and what it represents.

This way, capitalism creates not only victims but also united revolutionaries able to challenge, and eventually – possibly – overthrow the systems of violence and exploitation that produce toxicity (Armiero and De Angelis 356). Although they have been shaped by the forces of the Wasteocene, Animal and the Khã also represent the potential for resistance through mere continued existence beyond such violence. After all, although they appear to

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[29] There is a connection between this point of view and what Gloria Anzaldúa calls the "mestiza consciousness," a unique way of viewing the world that is formed in the borderlands between different cultures, languages, and identities (101). To enter these borderlands means to acknowledge the leakiness of categories and to adopt a more holistic perspective – "one that includes rather than excludes" (101). The result then, is exactly what is needed in order to depart from Western modes of devaluation and exploitation – a "massive uprooting of dualistic thinking in the individual and collective consciousness" (102).

[30] Meaning "friend" according to Animal's translation (Sinha 59).

have lost everything to the violence of the catastrophe, they still continue to struggle against the Kampani and its injustice. Their survival thus signals the possibility of change and marks "a new beginning, which (in keeping with the novel's apocalyptic tenor) doubles as the end of time" (Nixon 54). Mukherjee argues that the two characters represent a "peculiarly postcolonial form of resistance" that actually "derives its strength from the very poison with which the Kampani seeks to disable them" (228). Moreover, the poison's dual and somewhat contradictory purpose – killing, but also uniting – gives survivors the opportunity to reach beyond their individual selves toward "a collective consciousness" that is represented in Animal's mind-reading (228). According to Armiero and De Angelis, the formation of such "collective identities" formed "out of struggles" is actually key to building what they call a "revolutionary project" capable of resisting the Anthropocene (348).

The formation of such a revolutionary project emerges at the novel's ending, which shows Animal emerging from a second catastrophe as a conscious agent of human and non-human connectivity. In protest against the Indian courts' failure to punish the Kampani in the final trial, a riot breaks out on the streets of the city and a fire is set at the factory, both events foretold by Ma Franci in the preceding chapter as "the night of Qayamat, the end of all things" (Sinha 328). At the same time, after having his romantic advances rejected by Nisha, Animal runs away in despair and attempts to commit suicide by taking the pills he originally procured to poison Zafar (333-334). Under the influence of the ostensibly hallucinatory drug, Animal relates a fragmented and confused account of the riots. His flight through the streets ends with him running away to the jungle outside the city in an attempt to save his own life from the poisonous gases that once more envelop Khaufpur.[31] This escape removes Animal from the novel's urban setting and places him alongside plants and animals for the first time in the narrative. To begin with, Animal is completely alienated from his environment, and he struggles to connect with life outside the city. He reflects that "[t]his ground is strange to me, gone beedi wrappers, orange peels, plastic" (343). However, as the days pass and near-starvation adds to the drugs' effects on his mind, he is eventually able to achieve some kind of "hallucinatory communication" with the non-human beings of the jungle (Mukherjee 228). He

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[31] The chapters in this part of the novel are all difficult to follow because they reflect Animal's drug-addled confusion. It is hard to distinguish actual events from his illusions, but it appears that the riots break out due to rumours that the popular activist leader Zafar has died as a result of an extreme hunger strike against the Kampani. As Animal runs away from the city, he is therefore convinced that everyone he cares for is gone, and that he has played a role in the city's destruction because he once poisoned and thus weakened Zafar in an effort to sabotage his relationship with Nisha.

begins to hear the voices of the trees and animals around him and grows to understand his role as "a complete miniature universe stumbling around inside this larger one ... a fully fledged cosmos" (Sinha 350). This communion awakens in him a deeper manifestation of the cyborg consciousness represented in his mind-reading (Haraway "A Cyborg Manifesto" 311), evoking a sense of new beginnings, both for Animal and for Khaufpur.

The decisive moment of Animal's rebirth as an agent of resistance comes when he is about to collapse from lack of food and water. After several days spent wandering the jungle on his own, he finally comes across a cave where he can lie down and prepare for what he believes will be his death. However, inside the cave, he discovers an ancient cave painting that changes his perception of his place in the world and gives him new hope. In the painting, he sees,

> ... are animals of every kind, leopards and deer and horses and elephants, there's a tiger and a rhino, among them are small figures on two legs, except some have horns some have tails they are neither men nor animals, or else they are both, then I know that I have found my kind, plus this place will be my everlasting home. I have found it at last, this is the deep time when there was no difference between anything when separation did not exist when all things were together, one and whole before humans set themselves apart and became clever and made cities and kampanis and factories. (Sinha 352)

Through their categorical transcendence – so similar to Animal's own – the figures in the painting come to represent a worldview that stems from the "deep time," prior to the existence of Western capitalist separations of society and nature, human and animal. Free from the binary structure that Animal has been struggling to navigate, the figures in the painting inhabit their "neither-nor" identities fluidly. They reveal that the separation Animal feels between his human and animal identity is constructed by culture, as is humanity as a narrowly defined category used to organise exclusions. Animal, then, concludes his journey by realising that he is at once human and non-human, a bridge between society and nature (Mukherjee 228).

This way, the second fire at the Kampani's factory signals a new beginning and marks the inception of a community of survivors committed to a life in Khaufpur's ruins. Having finally come to terms with his identity, Animal is saved when his friends come to rescue him from the cave and return him to the city. At the end of his story, Animal comments that "Everything is the same, yet everything changed," signalling that the apocalypse has come to represent adaptation and transformation rather than an end to all life (Sinha 364). Life in

Khaufpur goes on much like before, but following the fire, Animal's perception of himself and his role in the community changes dramatically. Gone is his disdain for humanity, as well as his secret wish to become fully "human" by walking upright on two legs. He even declines Elli's offer to travel with her to America for an operation that would possibly straighten his spine. "If I'm an upright human," he reasons, "I would be one of millions, not even a healthy one at that. Stay four-foot, I'm the one and only Animal" (366). Through his connection with non-human life in the forest, his perception of the cave painting, and his community's efforts to rescue him, he has come to realise that there is power in his unique identity (Mukherjee 228). After all, it is the toxicity of his body that gives him what Alaimo calls "trans-corporeality" and Mukherjee calls "transpersonality" (Alaimo 262; Mukherjee 228). His marginal existence at the borders between human and animal is a necessary segment of the community that makes up the survivors of Khaufpur.

The result of Animal's acceptance and the apocalypse's second visit to the slums is the formation of a close community of poison survivors committed to survival after catastrophe. With a basis in a shared toxicity, the "people of the Apokalis," as Ma Franci calls them (Sinha 63), come together to resist the Wasteocene forces that continue to bring ruin to their city. At the very end of the last tape, Animal declares, "We are the people of the Apokalis. Tomorrow there will be more of us" (366). The switch in Animal's narration from "I" to "we" in the final line is notable, emphasising his newfound sense of community with the other human and non-human victims of the poison leak. The reference to "tomorrow" also contradicts Animal's previous assertion that there is no future in Khaufpur. Instead, it seems to indicate the possible imminent existence of a global network of survivors, as more societies begin to experience the effects of the Capitalocene's forces. According to Mukherjee and Nixon, this promise that the collective of survivors will spread serves a dual function. First, it is a "warning to those who wish to continue to deny personhood to other humans and nonhumans" that resistance will be mounted against them (Mukherjee 230). Second, it is a promise that the future will be represented by "the poor of the world," the revolutionaries created by capitalist exploitation (Nixon 59).[32]

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[32] The idea of a global community of Capitalocene and Wasteocene survivors is present throughout the narrative. Indeed, during his near-fatal hunger strike, Zafar rambles, "Is Khaufpur the only poisoned city? It is not. There are others and each one has its own Zafar. There'll be a Zafar in Mexico City and others in Hanoi and Manila and Halabja and there are the Zafars of Minamata and Seveso, of Sao Paolo and Toulouse…" (Sinha 296). The novel could have been set in any of these cities and still offered the same critique of capitalist neo-colonialism.

In the context of post-apocalyptic survival, Animal's cyborg narrative plays an important role in giving voice to the poison victims' struggle. It carries weight because it is told by a boy who has lost everything yet never given up, who believes that "[h]ope is a crutch for weaklings," and that "[t]he strong carry on without" (Sinha 75). Like Haraway's "cyborg", he defies the powers that made him ("A Cyborg Manifesto" 311). His story demonstrates both the injustice of the Capitalocene, and the survivors' capacity for resistance, resilience, and solidarity despite their precarious existence. Life in dystopia has taught them the "arts of living on a damaged planet" (Tsing et al.), a crucial skill for survival through the ecological devastation of the Anthropocene. Animal's narrative issues a challenge to capitalist ways of life that endanger the liveability of the planet. His toxic body and "transpersonality" defy categorisation and undermine the human/nature and self/other binary that justifies the Kampani's refusals of justice. This way, he breaks down the structures of exploitation that originally turned the people of Khaufpur into Wasteocene victims (Mukherjee 228). As Animal's "manic existence ... [dissolves]" the human/non-human divide, "we begin to hear the drums of an uprising" that has the potential to guide new ways of resistance in the Anthropocene (230).

In an interview, Sinha expresses a hope that his novel will raise awareness of the campaign for justice against Union Carbide and its owners (Moss n.p.). However, the story has a much wider potential for challenging the injustices of the Capitalocene. After all, Khaufpur represents not only Bhopal, but the "expanding zones of apocalyptic capitalism" that threaten to bring dystopia to other cities across the planet (Johnston 142). As Ma Franci predicts, it is not unlikely that the "Apokalis" will spread to eventually envelop the world (Sinha 63). When that happens, new strategies of survival based on caring and community will be needed.

Communities of Care in *Parable of the Sower*

Animal's People makes use of the present to show that methods of resistance emerge from the toxicity of the Wasteocene. Through *Parable of the Sower* emerge the strategies needed to adapt and survive in the Anthropocene's future. After Robledo falls to the guns and fire of the pyro addicts, Lauren follows the highway north in search of a place to settle down and establish her religion. With her are two other young survivors from the neighbourhood, and more people join as they continue their journey. Lauren's new ideology, Earthseed, does not discriminate, and she takes with her anyone who looks friendly and unable to make it on their own: young parents, runaway slaves, lone women, and orphaned children. It is fitting that Lauren's "hyperempathy" syndrome marks her as a "sharer" (Butler 178). On the way north, she shares not just sensations, but food, medicine, and her own poetry, the verses that make up Earthseed. In contrast to most Western narratives of post-apocalyptic survival, Butler presents a catastrophe that leads to brutal violence and to solidarity as well. Lauren contradicts the Hobbesian principle that states humans will always fight each other and prey on the weak without society to guide them. Earthseed stands for softer values of survival; it recognises that agriculture, storytelling, and healing can be more effective for recovery than guns. Like Le Guin's "carrier-bag" stories, *Parable of the Sower* is less about action than about a quiet gathering of the resources and communities that are needed to go on living in a dystopian future. It is significant that the novel is speculative; after all science fiction has always questioned humans' place in the world and challenged the boundaries between "problematic selves and unexpected others" (Haraway "Cyborg Manifesto" 300).[33] Like Animal with his mind-reading, Lauren's role as a sharer marks her as a "revolutionary subject" capable of resisting the capitalist apocalypse (Armiero and De Angelis 346). She is an intelligent girl, who thinks, theorises, empathises, and shares her way through the apocalypse. These qualities are what makes her capable of leading a revolution.

Reflecting in her journal on the deteriorating climate crisis, Lauren echoes Animal's declaration of resistance: "I am Earthseed. Anyone can be. Someday, I think there will be a lot of us" (Butler 66). Living with the effects of the Capitalocene, Lauren believes that the community of apocalypse-survivors will grow in size and strength as climate crisis becomes

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[33] The question of *Parable of the Sower*'s genre is complicated, but most choose to read it as a speculative novel. Butler, however, points out that there are no actual science fiction devices in the story because Lauren's condition is delusional. Lauren, she writes, "is not empathic. She feels herself to be … She has this delusion that she cannot shake. It's kind of biologically programmed into her" (Potts and Butler 335). In other words, Lauren's syndrome is not real in the sense that pain is actually transferred to her, however she does feel a kind of increased empathy for suffering that connects her to others.

part of the everyday for increasing numbers of people. This way, the increasing number of Capitalocene survivors makes possible more widespread efforts of resistance. Like Animal, Lauren is a product of the Capitalocene. It was her mother's prenatal use of "Einstein powder," a drug that boosts intellectual performance, that left its traces in Lauren's body and made her especially attuned to others (12). Her status as sharer makes her extremely vulnerable in the dystopian world but, at the same time, it gives her the tools necessary for gathering a community and facilitating collective survival. With her unique sensory reading ability, she is able to create a new ethics that prepares humans for earthly habitation through ecological crises. As Lauren puts it, we need to "[g]et ready to face what's going to happen, get ready to survive it, get ready to make a life afterward. Get focused on arranging to survive" (46). After all, in dystopia, adaptation is crucial.

Because of its focus on adaptation and resilience, *Parable of the Sower* stands out as a work of hopeful cli-fi literature compared to other Western post-apocalyptic novels. Imagining survival through dystopian conditions, it is an example of what Miller calls "post-apocalyptic hoping," stories that imagine catastrophe as a catalyst for change rather than death (336). There is a reason why both Evans and LeMenager identify cli-fi as a genre that shows that cultural change in the Anthropocene is not only possible, but necessary for our continued survival. While part of the novel's project is to show that capitalist culture plays a key role in creating the climate crisis, it does not stop there. After identifying capitalism as the problem, Butler "presents us with a seed of utopian hope" by making the apocalypse a new beginning for a new kind of society (354). Earthseed gives a sense that the ruins of dystopia might become the roots of a new world. Such "stories to live by" are part of "the larger project of making climate change publics savvy enough to imagine both thriving and surviving with global climate change" (LeMenager 223). Through the establishment of Earthseed, Lauren challenges capitalist culture "to learn to die" and make way for a new world with room for the human and non-human connections that make Anthropocene survival possible (231).

Within the novel's larger project of community-formation for Anthropocene survival, Lauren's role as a sharer is crucial. Her hyper-empathic condition has taught her to avoid unnecessary violence and to always take care of those around her. Her increased sensitivity is apparent from the beginning of the novel, when Lauren ventures outside the walls for gun practice with her father and some members of their community. On the way back to Robledo, the group comes across a dog that has been shot multiple times and left to die. For Lauren, it is enough to see others suffering in order to feel pain in her own body. "I saw its bloody

wounds as it twisted," she writes in her journal later that day. "I bit my tongue as the pain I knew it must feel became my pain" (Butler 36). When she shoots the dog to end its and her own suffering, her reaction is immediate and powerful: "I felt the impact of the bullet as a hard, solid blow – something beyond pain. Then I felt the dog die" (37). Because her syndrome forces her to experience any pain that she sees or inflicts, she is unable to accept the selfishness of her society's profit-driven capitalist culture. Back home in Robledo, she teaches and takes care of children. Later, out on the road, she teaches and takes care of survivors. In both roles, she demonstrates that her increased sensitivity and capacity for empathy can be both a sign of vulnerability and a tool for collective survival.

This way, hyperempathy emerges as a solution and alternative to the problems of the self-destructive capitalist culture of the novel. It highlights how an exaggerated focus on profit renders the government and corporations in power unable to function sustainably or to provide safety and stability to the population. Despite the pain it causes her, Lauren reflects that if more people suffered from her condition, it might actually improve the way humans relate to each other. As she puts it, "it might not be so bad a thing if most people had to endure all the pain they caused" (247). For her, even shooting a dog leads to unbearable agony. As her group travels north, she has to kill other humans in self-defence and experience the deaths of the people she kills. These repeated deaths leave her traumatised, but also certain that more hyperempathy is what the world needs. After all, in such a society, "who would torture? Who would cause anyone unnecessary pain?" (100). The fractured post-apocalyptic world is a constant source of pain to Lauren, but it also needs her because she functions as a sharp contrast to the lack of caring exhibited by most of its inhabitants. Because it turns "compassion into an illness," Lauren's sharing "defamiliarizes our current indifference toward each other" and makes capitalist societies' lack of empathy seem strange instead (Miller 357). Thus, according to Miller, Lauren's condition has the potential to become both "a source of wisdom and a cure for the worst of our nightmares" because it provides a profound contrast not only to the dystopian world of the novel, but also to the society in which we currently live (357).

In Lauren's story, her syndrome functions as an important means of survival because it, much like Animal's mind-reading, has implications for the Western cultural division between self and other. Similarly to the toxic bodies of Khaufpur's survivors, Lauren has inherited a kind of toxicity from her drug-addicted mother. This toxicity erases her "borders" and makes the boundaries of her individual self "leaky" by making it impossible for her to

distinguish between her own and others' suffering (Alaimo 262). Haraway, in particular, stresses the kind of boundary-breakdown represented by both Animal and Lauren as key to refuting Western capitalist culture's conceit of self-sufficiency. To survive in what she calls the Chthulucene era, Western societies will have to learn to pay attention to the "symbiotic entanglements" represented in Lauren's sharing ("Symbiogenesis" M25-M26).[34] If we put aside the linear, progressive, and teleological narratives of the Anthropocene, the Capitalocene, and the Wasteocene, what emerges is an era of ongoing connections, relations, and life in which "earthlings are Never Alone" (M25). Through her acts of sharing of both human and non-human sensations, Lauren emerges as a cyborg-like figure. She is both a product of the system that destroyed her world and a force of resistance capable of overthrowing the unsustainable values of that system. Because she blurs the line that divides humans from the rest of the natural world, she is able to prompt a rethinking of capitalism's exploitative and separated relationship to nature. This is crucial because such a capacity to recognise "the wonders and terrors of symbiotic entanglements" is key to discovering viable methods of resistance and survival in the Anthropocene (Tsing et al. "Bodies" M2).

It is also through her experiences as a sharer that Lauren is able to establish Earthseed as an effective community of caring. Taking into account Lauren's way of "being-with-other" (Phillips 306), it should come as no surprise that the belief system she creates focuses on the importance of mutual dependencies, acceptance, and change. The community's project, almost utopian in its beliefs, is to embrace rather than resist the changes that come from ecological devastation and societal ruin. Rather than try to resist or deny the collapsing world, Lauren sets out to create a community capable of adapting to the conditions of the present. As Peter Stillman puts it, she challenges the "hierarchy and domination" of the collapsing capitalist system, and instead makes an "attempt to hope, think, and act in Utopian, promising, or novel ways" in order to "establish a caring community" that is built on different values (16, 29). The basis for this adaptation is Lauren's preaching, and its emphasis on embracing diversity and caring for others regardless of who, or what, they are. Repeated throughout the

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[34] In addition to writing about symbiosis, Haraway uses the term "sympoiesis" to refer to the connections between human and non-human life that make survival through crisis possible. The term is meant to contradict both industrial capitalism's disregard for the natural world and the delusional autonomy of the Western rational and transcendent subject. As she puts it in her contribution to Tsing et al.'s study, "*Sym-poiesis* is a simple word; it means "making-with." Nothing makes itself; nothing is really auto-poietic or self-organizing … Sympoiesis is a word proper to complex, dynamic, responsive, situated, historical systems. It is a word for worlding" ("Symbiogenesis" M25). By "worlding," she means the project of creating a liveable world in a present of ecological crisis and devastation.

novel as a principle of survival in dystopia, is that "[n]o one should travel alone in this world" (Butler 283). Earthseed, then, offers "solidarity, protection, and friendship" to anyone who is willing to follow its tenets of acceptance (Stillman 23).

As Lauren gathers other survivors during her journey, she shares with them the verses she has written for Earthseed in order to help them adapt to the post-apocalyptic world. Ever since she was twelve years old and began questioning her father's religion, she has been writing verses about her belief that God is just another word for change, the natural state of the world (Butler 25). These verses, simple lines of poetry meant to be memorised, are able to convince her followers of her beliefs because they are "soft, non-preachy ... good for road-weary minds and bodies" (213). They have power because, as poetry, they are able to not just impart a message but to create new awareness in those who hear them. Already during her childhood in Robledo, Earthseed emerges as a source of inspiration for Lauren's writing of poetry. Later, this poetry makes it possible for her to express a new way of living and adapting in response to crisis. As she grows up, she gathers these verses into a volume that summarises Earthseed's way of understanding the world. With this "Book of the Living" – the title itself represents survival – she intends to guide the other survivors of dystopia, to "pry them loose from the rotting past, and maybe push them into saving themselves and building a future that makes sense" (79). Through Earthseed, Lauren turns her fellow survivors into a united group of followers, building her community on a foundation of poetry that stresses interconnection and co-dependency.

The potential of Lauren's verses to unite aimlessly wandering survivors around common beliefs is precisely what the post-apocalyptic world of the novel needs. As Lauren remarks in an Earthseed verse, society's inevitable loss of stability divides rather than brings people together; in what appears almost an echo of Thomas Hobbes' description of the state of nature, she writes that without a unifying power, people in need will naturally resort to violence in order to survive (103).[35] This condition of unrestrained conflict appears to be the natural end result of the novel's exaggerated Western, capitalist mode of individualism and self-sufficiency. Lauren and her Earthseed community is set apart from the other wanderers,

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[35] The full verse is clearly inspired by Hobbes' descriptions of humans without society in *Leviathan*: "*When apparent stability disintegrates, / As it must– / God is Change— / People tend to give in / To fear and depression, / To need and greed. / When no influence is strong enough / To unify people / They divide. / They struggle, / One against one, / Group against group, / For survival, position, power / They remember old hates and generate new ones, / They create chaos and nurture it. / They kill and kill and kill, / Until they are exhausted and destroyed, / Until they are conquered by outside forces, / Or until one of them becomes / A leader / Most will follow, / Or a tyrant / Most fear*" (103). The final line echoes Hobbes' description of the sovereign.

whose primary methods of survival consist of robbery, murder, and in some cases even cannibalism. Because Lauren′s group works together to help the people who need it most, Earthseed avoids becoming a ″gang,″ and instead teaches people to overcome their differences ″in favor of interdependence as a longterm survival strategy″ (Miller 355). In their community, members keep Lauren′s verses in mind and care for each other even through the harsh conditions on the road north. Because she chooses to believe that ″Kindness eases Change,″ she promotes caring for others as the best ″cure for nightmares″ dystopia has to offer (Butler 147, 228). The community illustrates that once the nightmarish conditions of the apocalyptic world have been addressed, it will become possible ″to dream″ of a more hopeful future (Miller 357). This way, in the novel caring for the other becomes a way to show that ″despite the bleak landscape, change is possible″ (352).

However, amidst disaster this hopeful future seems distant, and to ″stay with the trouble″ through the Anthropocene′s changes is difficult even for Lauren (Haraway ″Introduction″ 2). Although she believes that adaptation to changing conditions is key to survival, Lauren is unable to imagine a future where Earthseed has to share the planet with the ruins and remnants of the pre-apocalyptic society. A future on earth, she believes, will reduce humans to ″smooth-skinned dinosaurs – here today, gone tomorrow, our bones mixed with the bones and ashes of our cities″ (Butler 197). Therefore, her faith in survival through interdependency originally culminates in a plan to gather a group of people that will leave behind the damaged earth and settle on a new planet – to ″take root among the stars″ (66).[36] This way, the new community will be able to start over again completely free of the destructive capitalist culture and destroyed environment. However, the idea of leaving behind the planet amounts to a denialism much like Robledo′s. It contradicts both Lauren′s own ideals of adaptability, as well as those put forward by recent critics in the environmental humanities, such as Donna Haraway and Anna Tsing et al. In addition, the idea that climate crisis can be left behind represents what Plumwood calls ″an illusory sense of detachability from the earth″ (Plumwood 240). After all, such an escape lies far outside the realm of possibility for most of the population, both in the novel and in the present. In this sense, Butler′s novel occupies a strange space between Earthseed′s belief in endurance and ″a more

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[36] It is interesting to note that Butler herself seems to share the belief that humans would be better off starting anew on a different planet. In an interview, she says that she thinks ″the best way to do something else is to go someplace else where the demands on us will be different. Not because we are going to go someplace else and change ourselves, but because we will go someplace else and be forced to change″ (Potts and Butler 335). While this may be true, the possibility of leaving behind earth any time soon is slim outside of speculative fiction.

typically American and transcendalist imaginary" that envisions space colonisation as a plausible future (LeMenager 228).

Instead, Earthseed would benefit from taking inspiration from Animal's collective of survivors, who recognise that starting over in a new place – let alone on a new planet – is unlikely to become an option. Because they have nowhere else to go, their hopes for the future remain firmly rooted in Khaufpur. Lauren, too, eventually realises that space travel is unlikely; by the end of the novel, she has decided that Earthseed will have to "take root ... among the ashes" instead (Butler 197). Her solution is a project ultimately more in keeping with Haraway and Tsing et al.'s strategies for Anthropocene survival than those promoted in most popular dystopian narratives. Instead of continuing their journey north, the Earthseed followers stop walking, not because they have given up, but because they have decided to establish a community. Acorn, as Lauren names the settlement, becomes "the first Earthseed Community" and a precedent for similar communities that Lauren hopes to establish across the country in the future (245). Working together, the community succeeds in creating a small agrarian society built on "democratic and sustainable living" and a mindful management of resources (Morris 277).[37] Through this cooperation, the community suggests that "while humanity may be an inherently hierarchical species, human hierarchies are not inevitable" (279-280). For the survivors, it is possible to come together across all of the barriers of class, race, and gender that would have separated them in the pre-apocalyptic world. The name "Acorn" is fitting, because, as Phillips points out, "to see a forest of oak trees as latent in a handful of acorns is to see the world as radical possibility" (308). Far from Earthseed's original mission of escape from the planet, Acorn constitutes an effort to rebuild in the remains of dystopia – to "join forces to reconstitute refuges" as Haraway puts it ("Anthropocene" 160).[38]

Acorn is not truly utopia realised, as survival through societal and environmental collapse is demanding and there are losses of many kinds. However, it does provide a haven

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[37] While there is little room here for a discussion of sustainability, it is interesting to note that Plumwood has identified such "small scale communities" as especially suited to creating more ecologically attuned societies (74). Because they rely on close connections and mutual responsibility, they counteract the "remoteness" that makes it possible to displace consequences of unsustainable actions (74). After all, in small communities, inhabitants "will have to live with the ecological consequences of their decisions" (74).

[38] I want to note that the novel's sequel, *Parable of the Talents,* engages with a different kind of Anthropocene survival. It tells the story of Acorn's collapse and the Earthseed community's struggle against the forces that are trying to reinstate the pre-apocalyptic world's extreme version of capitalist society. Despite their persecution, the community survives and grows to become a decentralised movement of resistance, committed to creating a world built on principles of interdependency and change.

and a chance for survival in the midst of the chaos of a disintegrating society. As Lauren puts it, "It will be hard to live here, but if we work together, and if we're careful, it should be possible. We can build a community here" (Butler 285). Much like in *Animal's People,* the apocalypse becomes a catalyst for change that challenges the survivors to adapt to a life with ecological crisis. In some ways, then, survival through societal collapse also involves "learning to die," as it means letting go of one way of life in favour of another (LeMenager 236). Following the collapse of society in the novel, alternative ways of inhabiting the earth have room to grow. These ways of living are not new, but rather based on a long tradition of adaptation to climate crisis by indigenous people, people of colour, and others who have long had to experience dystopia in the present (Whyte "Our Ancestors' Dystopia" 208). However, because it illustrates how Western societies may apply these strategies in an Anthropocene future, Butler's novel functions as "a working model for stories to live by – rather than stories to die by" (LeMenager 226). What we need in the present to counteract defeatist narratives of apocalypse is therefore poetry like Lauren's Earthseed verses, capable of uniting survivors around a common cause. In the end, what Earthseed demonstrates is that life with climate change can be managed by "coming together in local communities, often watershed-based, to save what can be saved" and by "*making* home of a broken world" (228, 226). Far from leaving behind the planet and all of its problems, Anthropocene survival demands endurance.

As Haraway puts it, "Our task," in the Anthropocene is not to get caught up in hopeless predictions or regrets, but rather "to make trouble, to stir up potent response to devastating events, as well as to settle troubled waters and rebuild quiet places" ("Introduction" 1). In other words, we – meaning Western societies – must come together to imagine futures built on close connections to others of many different kinds. For this to become possible, capitalist cultures will have to acknowledge that "the world lives inside of us, and we it" (LeMenager 221). We need to learn that the human cannot be separated from the earth and that dualistic ways of thinking leads to the destruction of both the self and the other. Lauren and Animal, both "cyborg" narrators formed by the Wasteocene (Haraway "A Cyborg Manifesto" 311), turn toxicity into resistance by opposing the systems that made them. Through their "transpersonal" and "symbiotic" abilities (Mukherjee 228; Haraway "Symbiogenesis" M25), they connect closely to others and expose and challenge the Western self/other binary. Furthermore, they use their heightened capacities for empathy to build communities of resistance and mutual care in times of change. Gathering other survivors, they

"make kin," create other kinds of communities, and commit to the "practice of learning to live and die well with each other in a thick present" (Haraway "Introduction" 1).

Their tools for this community-building project are stories. Animal, through his tape recorder, and Lauren, through her journal and poetry, tell stories that accept change and adversity without giving in to despair. Through these stories, they reach out to others who have not given up in order to see what possibilities remain to them after the apocalypse. In the Anthropocene, such narratives of survival are particularly important because we now, more than ever, need stories that take us away from the Capitalocene and into the Chthulucene (1) – stories that promise to make a life in the ruins.

Conclusion

"With my friends, I want to write natural history at the end of the second Christian millennium to see if some other stories are possible, ones not premised on the divide between nature and culture, armed cherubim, and heroic quests for secrets of life and secrets of death," Donna Haraway writes in an essay on the vital connections between stories, humans, and nature ("Otherworldly Conversations" 160). In the era we call the Anthropocene, the Western dream of human independency is collapsing under the immensity of climate crisis.

Since not all humans are equally responsible for ecological devastation, and not all suffer from it equally, there must be a recognition of the West's role in creating a future life on earth which humans will be "unable to bear" (Tsing et al. "Haumted Landscapes" G1). At the same time, we must all instead learn to inhabit the earth sustainably to survive our current dystopia and create a liveable future. Therefore, we must rediscover the crucial but lost connections and entanglements between human and non-human nature that make life possible. And as Haraway points out, this task requires that we find a way to tell stories that offer strategies for survival, resistance, and hope in the midst of widespread destruction. Unlike scientific or theoretical accounts, works of literature provide "the necessary stimulus to imagining pasts, presents, and the yet-to-come" ("Bodies" M8). Specifically, we need stories that offer opportunities to hope for a life in and beyond the Anthropocene, what LeMenager calls "stories to live by" and stories for "thriving and surviving" despite crisis (226, 223). Realistic or speculative, set in the present or in the future, climate fiction can offer hope and teach methods of resistance and survival in unstable times.

Animal's People and *Parable of the Sower* represent such texts because they avoid giving in to the "radical pessimism" of most apocalyptic narratives (Lepore n.p.). Because they imagine living through the apocalypse, they demonstrate the strategies of resistance and resilience necessary to inhabit the Anthropocene through all of its crises and challenges. Using the powerful voices of their first-person narrators, these novels communicate the valuable experiences and knowledge of individual human beings living through ecological crisis. Through Animal's tapes and Lauren's journal, Sinha and Butler return the narrative control to the victims and survivors and thus challenge the silencing universality of the Anthropocene narrative. By refusing to remain silent, the two narrators reclaim voice and agency in an era otherwise determined by "grand narratives," "hyperobjects," and the effects of "slow violence" (Armiero and De Angelis 346; Morton 1; Nixon 2). "[W]riter-activists" such as Sinha may be at the forefront of leading such efforts to take back control and demand justice (Nixon 15), but I believe speculative fiction such as Butler's novel can play an equally

important role as well. "We see in fiction what we refuse to see in the real world," writes Miller, and speculative fiction does comment on the present by exploring the relationship between dystopian realities and utopian possibilities in an imagined future (352).

Much like recent environmental humanities theory, what Sinha and Butler's novels ultimately demonstrate is that capitalist societies are unable to inhabit the earth sustainably or to generate a liveable future. Indeed, echoing Haraway, Tsing et al. claim that "[o]ur continued survival" in the Anthropocene "demands that we learn something about how best to live and die within the entanglements we have" ("Bodies" M4). This learning, however, cannot emerge from theory alone, but must instead be demonstrated through fiction. In Sinha and Butler's texts, Lauren and Animal's cyborg bodies and minds challenge the dualistic separation that underlies patterns of violence and domination in capitalist culture by blurring the lines between self and other, culture and nature, human and non-human. If we listen to their stories, we might learn to let go of the notion that humans exist in isolation. By listening closely, we might even learn to reimagine our relationships to the many humans and non-humans that capitalist culture has reduced to resources. The world might not be ending, but our way of exploiting it is. And such an end to dualistic thinking is the necessary first step if we aspire to live in Haraway's "Chthulucene" ("Introduction 1), a time of crisis, but also of rediscovered entanglements with others.

Ursula Le Guin warns us that "[c]hanging our minds is going to be a big change. To use the world well, to be able to stop wasting it and our time in it, we need to relearn our being in it" ("Deep in Admiration" M15). What the present and coming climate crises demand, above all, is adaptation. After all, "worlds have ended many times before," and what the apocalypse requires is adjustment to a life in the ruins of capitalism (Tsing et al. "Haunted Landscapes" G6). As Lauren writes after leaving behind the ruins of Robledo to start anew, "In order to rise / From its own ashes / A phoenix / First / Must / Burn" (Butler 153). Above all, climate crisis represents a call for us to learn what Tsing et al. call the "arts of living on a damaged planet" ("Haunted Landscapes" G7). In the post-apocalyptic remnants of their worlds, Earthseed and the "people of the Apokalis" demonstrate that these arts are founded not on segregation, violence, or despair (Sinha 63). Instead, they emerge through "carrier-bag" storytelling, narratives focused on adaptation, symbiosis, community, and a commitment to life in a challenging present (Le Guin 167).

The present era of ecological devastation represents a break with the past; in Haraway's words, "what comes after will not be like what came before" ("Anthropocene"

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160). At the site of the abandoned factory in Khaufpur – a "haunted" and barren place that the local people continue to avoid – "a silent war is being waged" as vegetation grows up amidst the ruins and struggles to "take back the land" that the poison leak destroyed (Sinha 29, 31). This regrowth at the site of the catastrophe illustrates that recovery is possible following even the most severe of losses. Life in "landscapes grown from such endings" is simultaneously "our disaster as well as our weedy hope," reminding us both of what has been lost and of what can be rebuilt in its place (Tsing et al. "Haunted Landscapes" G7). The project of Anthropocene survival is therefore a question of finding stories that can "radically imagine worlds that are possible because they are already there" (G12), as is the case in Bhopal, in Khaufpur, in the histories of indigenous peoples, and in the imagined realms of Butler's Earthseed community.

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